PRICE ONE SHILLING.

FOR THE DEFENCE

BY

B. L. FARJEON

TRISCHLER AND CO., LONDON

A WONDERFUL MEDICINE.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

Are admitted by thousands to be worth above a Guinea a Box for Bilious and Nervous Disorders, such as Wind and Pain in the Stomach, Sick Headache, Giddiness, Fulness and Swelling after Meals, Dizziness and Drowsiness, Cold Chills, Flushings of Heat, Loss of Appetite, Shortness of Breath, Costiveness, Scurvy, Blotches on the Skin, Disturbed Sleep, Frightful Dreams, and all Nervous and Trembling Sensations, &c. The first dose will give relief in twenty minutes. This is no fiction, for they have done it in thousands of cases. Every sufferer is earnestly invited to try one box of these Pills, and they will be acknowledged to be

Worth a Guinea a Box.

For females of all ages these Pills are invaluable, as a few doses of them carry off all humours, and bring about all that is required. No female should be without them. There is no medicine to be found to equal

BEECHAM'S PILLS

for removing any obstruction or irregularity of the system. If taken according to the directions given with each box they will soon restore females of all ages to sound and robust health.

For a weak stomach, impaired digestion, and all disorders of the liver they act like "Magic," and a few doses will be found to work wonders upon the most important organs of the human machine. They strengthen the whole muscular system, restore the long-lost complexion, bring back the keen edge of appetite, and arouse into action, with the Rosebud of Health, the whole physical energy of the human frame. These are "facts" admitted by thousands, embracing all classes of society, and one of the best guarantees to the Nervous and Debilitated is

BEECHAM'S PILLS have the Largest Sale of any Patent Medicine in the World.

Full directions are given with each Box.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers in the United Kingdom, in Boxes at 13½d. and 2s. 9d. each.

RB 75 396

FOR THE DEFENCE.

SOLD EVERYWHERE.

The words "Cherry Blossom" are registered as JOHN GOSNELL & CO.'s Trade Mark.

TESTIMONIAL of DR. ALEXANDER BOWIE, M.D., C.M., L.R.C.P., &c.,

Physician and Lecturer to St. John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin.

23, Harley Street, Cavendish Street, London, W.

SIRS,—I have personally tested your "Cherry Blossom Soap," and in my opinion it is the very best Soap before the public for Toilet use. It leaves the skin fragrant and of velvety softness, and is a most elegant preparation.—Yours truly,

MESSRS. JOHN GOSNELL & CO., London. (*Signed*) ALEXANDER BOWIE.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

PRIZE NOVEL

THE ONLY WITNESS:

WHAT DID SHE SEE?

BY

E. J. GOODMAN.

Every Purchaser will have a Chance of Winning

FIRST PRIZE £30
SECOND PRIZE £15
THIRD PRIZE £5

Offered by the Publishers for the best solution of the mystery of the story.

The *Daily Telegraph* says, "The story is keenly exciting throughout, and the author has used much literary skill and graphic power in weaving the intricacies of the problem to be solved."

TRISCHLER & CO., LONDON.

NEW BOOK JUST ISSUED.

ALWAYS IN THE WAY;

OR,

MR. RUMMINS

WITH ROD, HOUNDS, AND RIFLE.

BY

T J. JEANS,

AUTHOR OF

"The Tommiebeg Shootings."

WITH NINE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

FINCH MASON.

ONE VOLUME.

Cloth extra. Three Shillings and Sixpence.

TRISCHLER & Co., 18, New Bridge Street.

CONTENTS.

Chapter		Page
I.	Mrs. Tregartin gives her Evidence	9
II.	The Friends	24
III.	Mrs. Tregartin continues her Evidence ...	30
IV.	What occurred on the 25th of April ...	41
V.	Cross-Examination of Mrs. Tregartin... ...	50
VI.	The Two Sisters Tree	57
VII.	The Close of the Prosecution	72
VIII.	The Interview...	80
IX.	"Can you forgive me?"	88
X.	Silly Thomas distinguishes Himself	95
XI.	Mrs. Tregartin makes a Discovery	104
XII.	Startling Revelations	113
XIII.	Mr. Justice Richbell	120
XIV.	Sandy, the Judge's own Man, stops the way	129
XV.	The Sins of the Father	137
XVI.	Mr. Justice Richbell examining the Two Letters	148
XVII.	The Man Maxwell	153
XVIII.	The Third Day of the Trial	169
XIX.	Maxwell makes open Confession	185
XX.	The End of the Trial	194
XXI.	Mr. Justice Richbell bids Farewell to Bench and Bar	201
XXII.	Good-Bye to England	206
XXIII.	From the New World to the Old	213

Ten Pounds In Two Weeks Think of it !!

As a **FLESH PRODUCER** there can be no question but that

Scott's Emulsion

—OF—

Pure Cod Liver Oil

—AND—

Hypophosphites

Of Lime and Soda

is without a rival. Many have gained a pound a day by the use of it. It cures

CONSUMPTION,

SCROFULA, BRONCHITIS, COUGHS AND COLDS, AND ALL FORMS OF WASTING DISEASES. *AS PALATABLE AS MILK.*

Be sure you get the genuine as there are poor imitations.

FIFTEENTH THOUSAND.

FOR THE DEFENCE.

A REALISTIC AND SENSATIONAL STORY OF HUMAN NATURE.

BY

B. L. FARJEON.

AUTHOR OF "GREAT PORTER SQUARE," "SET IN A SILVER SEA," "GRIF," "THE HOUSE OF WHITE SHADOWS," "THE BLOOD WHITE ROSE," ETC.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

LONDON:
TRISCHLER & COMPANY,
18, NEW BRIDGE STREET, E.C.
1891.

KEATING'S POWDER.

KILLS
- BUGS.
- FLEAS.
- MOTHS.
- BEETLES.
- MOSQUITOES.

HARMLESS TO ANIMALS.

HARMLESS TO ANIMALS.

KILLS
- BUGS.
- FLEAS.
- MOTHS.
- BEETLES.
- MOSQUITOES.

The **PUBLIC** are **CAUTIONED** that packages of the genuine powder bear the autograph of **THOMAS KEATING** Sold in Tins, 6d. and 1s. each everywhere.

FOR THE DEFENCE.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. TREGARTIN GIVES HER EVIDENCE.

"CALL Emily Tregartin."

The witness, a woman with a pleasant face, of about forty-five years of age, decently dressed, stepped into the box, and was sworn.

"Your name is Emily Tregartin?"

"Yes, sir, it is."

"You are a married woman?"

"I am, sir. My husband is a gardener."

"Where do you reside?"

"At No. 4, Love Lane."

"Have you any family?"

"One little boy, sir. Jimmy."

"How far is your cottage from Brentingham Forest?"

"About three-quarters of a mile."

"How far from Rocky Reaches?"

"About a mile, perhaps."

"In the same direction as the forest?"

"No, sir; the other way."

"Is Brentingham Forest very woody?"

"Very thick with trees, sir."

"A lonely spot?"

"Yes, sir, except for picnics."

"Are many picnics held there?"

"Not many, sir."

"What kind of place is Rocky Reaches?"

"Nothing but rocks and bits of sea. We catch crabs there."

"Is the water in parts deep and dangerous?"

"In a good many parts. It ain't safe to bathe anywhere out of your depth."

"Do you remember the night of the 25th May?"

The witness did not reply immediately, and the question was repeated, with the remark, "You are here in the interests of truth, Mrs. Tregartin. Speak frankly."

Witness: "I remember the night well, sir."

"Was it a stormy night?"

"Very stormy. My husband said it was blowing great guns."

"In such weather, according to your experience, would Rocky Reaches be especially dangerous?"

"Yes, sir, it would—all the water in a passion like—boiling over the rocks, and spirting up dreadful."

"You know the prisoner?"

"Yes, sir."

(It was observed that at this first direct reference to the unfortunate young creature in the dock, the witness gazed at her with tender interest and sympathy.)

"How long have you been acquainted with her?"

"Since the first week in December."

"Can you fix the precise date?"

"No, sir, it was on a Tuesday."

"It was, then, on the Tuesday in the first week in December that you first saw her?"

"Yes, sir."

"Having never seen her before?"

"Never, sir."

"And having had no previous knowledge of her?"

"No, sir."

"Tell the court what happened on this first visit."

"Do you mean what passed between us, sir?"

"Yes."

"She came to our cottage when there was nobody but me at home, and asked if I had a bedroom to let. We had a room empty that my husband's mother used to occupy; she was dead a fortnight when the young lady came——"

"Meaning the prisoner?"

"Yes, sir. And the funeral had put us to a bit of expense, besides black clothes for me and my husband and Jimmy. So when the young lady asked me if I had a room to let I thought of that one, and that it would be a good opportunity to turn an honest penny. But I didn't like to let it without my husband's consent, and I told the young lady so. She asked where my husband was, and I said at work, and that he would be home about six. Then she asked whether she might stop till he came home, and I said yes."

"At what hour of the day did this take place?"

"About three in the afternoon."

"Go on."

"She sat down quite quiet by the window, and looked out, without speaking a word. There was snow in the air, and presently it began to fall—not very thick at first, but I soon saw we were in for a storm.

All this while the young lady kept by the window, hardly moving; I couldn't see her face, though I knew it was sweet and pretty. I caught a glimpse of it when she first came to the cottage door."

"Did she wear a veil?"

"Yes, sir; and when she asked about the room she didn't lift it, but the wind caught it once, and it was then I saw her face. At a little past four Jimmy came home from school, and the young lady started up, thinking it might be my husband; but seeing my little boy she sat down again by the window. Tea was all ready for him, and we were having it together when I thought it was cruel of me to let the young lady sit there all alone like, and as if she hadn't a friend in the world. I'm sure she looked like it, and I'd been wondering a good deal about her. So I went to her and asked her if she wouldn't take a cup of tea. She didn't answer me, and didn't as much as look up, and I laid my hand on her shoulder and said, 'Come, my dear lady, you must be faint; a cup of hot tea will do you no harm, and you're heartily welcome.' And still she didn't answer me; but I heard something like a sob, and bending down I saw that she was crying. I made no more ado, but I took her to the bedroom, and took off her hat and veil, and bathed her face, and said, 'Come along now and make yourself comfortable.' She thanked me in a low voice that went straight to my heart, it was so like a little child speaking. I persuaded her to drink two cups of tea, but she couldn't eat; she said she wasn't hungry, but I saw that she couldn't get the bread and butter down, and that made me pity her more and more. The snow was falling very thick by this time, and after tea she asked me

whether she might go back to the window, and I said, yes, of course she might; and she went and sat there till it got quite dark, never speaking a word all the time. I know sorrow when I see it, sir, and I saw it then; and I know goodness when I see it, and I was sure she was good. It was clear enough to me that she was in some trouble, and I wished I could help her, but I didn't ask her any questions. I let her have her way; it's always best. At seven o'clock my husband came home, and then the young lady rose and looked at him, entreating him like. I didn't give him time to make any remarks. 'I want to speak to you,' I said, and I took him and Jimmy out of the room, and told him all I knew. He didn't say anything at first, but turned the thing over in his mind—a way he's got when there's anything particular to be decided—and then he said he didn't care to have a stranger with us, and that, though the funeral and black clothes had cost us a bit of money, we had paid for them and didn't owe anybody a farthing. That was true, and I couldn't dispute it. My husband's a good chap, but he's got a will of his own, and if you want him to stick to anything all you've got to do is to contradict him. I took care not to, though my heart was bleeding for the poor young lady. Out he went to her, and told her he was sorry, but we didn't have a room to spare. She listened quite humbly, and said, without a murmur, 'Thank you; then I must go away.' He had brought her hat and mantle from the bedroom, and she put them on. Then she took out her purse, and put a shilling on the table. 'What's that for?' asked my man. 'For the tea,' answered the young lady, 'your good wife was kind enough to give me.' 'Lord!' I said, with a lump

in my throat, 'she didn't take a bite.' 'You're welcome to a cup of tea,' said my husband, putting the shilling back in her hand; 'we can't take money for that.' She went to the door and opened it, and the snow came driving in. She fell back just as if she'd received a blow, but she straightened herself directly, and saying very sweetly, 'Good-night,' was going out when my husband caught her by the arm. 'Are you going to your friends?' he asked. 'I haven't any,' she answered. 'Where are you off to, then?' he asked. 'I don't know,' she answered. I couldn't speak; my tears were choking me. 'Do you mean to tell me you've no place to go to?' asked my husband. 'None,' she said. 'Nor any place to sleep in?' 'None. It's the first time I've been in this part of the country.' My man stared at this, as well he might. 'Where do you come from?' he asked. 'A long, long way from here,' she answered, oh, so wearily! 'Fifty miles?' 'More than that.' 'A hundred?' 'Yes, I think so. Please,' she said, raising her face to him, but I'm sure she couldn't see his for the tears in her eyes, 'don't ask me any more questions. I'm tired and weak; let me go.' 'No, I'm hanged if you shall,' said my man. 'You can stop here to-night, and we'll talk about it to-morrow. I wouldn't turn a cat out on such a night.' Upon that the young lady broke down, and began to cry, so that my husband went away, saying, 'Mother, look after the child,' and I took her in my arms, and did what I could to comfort her. She was so young, sir, and seemed so lonely."

The Judge: "Take a little time, Mrs. Tregartin. It is nothing to your discredit that you should be agitated."

After a pause of a few minutes, during which all eyes but those of the Judge and the counsel for the prosecution and the defence were fixed upon the prisoner—who, from the moment she was brought into the court, had not raised her head—the examination of the witness was resumed :

"The prisoner remained with you that night?"

"Yes, sir; and the next morning she was so ill that I saw it would be dangerous for her to get up. So I made her keep her bed, and asked her if I should send for a doctor. She was so frightened at the idea of seeing a stranger that I did not insist upon it, but nursed her myself, and in a few days she was well enough to get about the house."

"And then?"

"My husband consented to let her remain with us, and she agreed to pay twelve shillings a week for board and lodging."

"She lived with you till she was arrested?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sleeping in your cottage every night?"

"Every night, with one exception."

"We will come to that in due time. Did she seem to have plenty of money?"

"I don't know about that, sir. She paid regularly, always two weeks in advance."

"Now, for the first month she was with you, did you have any suspicion of her condition?"

"I may have had, but I didn't say anything to her or anybody. After all, I thought, I might be mistaken. We got very fond of her, sir."

"I will not press the question. How did she occupy her time during that month?"

"Sometimes she read, sometimes she wrote."

"Letters?"

"Yes, sir."

"To whom?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Who posted those letters?"

"The young lady herself."

"Did she never give you any to post for her?"

"Never."

"Do you know to whom they were addressed?"

"No, sir."

"Then you cannot say whether they were addressed to more than one person?"

"No, sir."

"When she wrote her letters were you at any time present?"

"Never."

"She wrote them in her own room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Taking care that she was alone?"

"It does seem like it, sir."

"You understand that we are now confining ourselves to the first month of her living with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"We will get beyond that time presently. During the period of which we are speaking did any letters for the prisoner arrive at your house?"

"None, sir."

"Not one?"

"Not one."

"Did she receive any addressed to her elsewhere—at the village post-office, for instance?"

"I don't know for certain. I oughtn't to say anything I'm not sure of."

"Quite right. I may take it, then, that you have no positive knowledge of her receiving any letters addressed to her elsewhere?"

"I don't know anything about it for certain."

"All through that month did she do nothing but read and write letters?"

"Oh, yes, sir; she did some work."

"Needlework?"

"Yes, sir."

"For herself?"

"And for me as well. She would come down and say, 'Mrs. Tregartin, give me something to do, please.' And if there was any mending to do she'd insist upon doing it for me. She made me some aprons, and kept Jimmy's clothes in nice order, and my husband's, too. Sometimes she'd ask me to let her help me in the cooking, and I couldn't refuse her, though she wasn't much of a cook."

"Did it appear to you that she was a person accustomed to household work?"

"Not at all, sir. She is a lady born and bred, and educated as such. We've got four pictures she painted for us hanging in the room. They're beautiful, and my husband thinks all the world of them."

"Where did she obtain the painting materials?"

"She ordered them in the village, and they sent for them for her."

"What are the subjects of the paintings?"

"There are two pictures of Brentingham Forest, and two of Rocky Reaches. I never saw anything like them. You'd think you were in the places themselves."

"Did she do anything else for you?"

"She taught Jimmy of an evening, and he got along better with her than he did at school."

"Where did she keep her needlework and other things belonging to her?"

"In a box she bought in the village. She brought nothing with her when she came to us, and she had to buy everything she wanted."

"She kept this box locked?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did she tell you her name was Mary Lee?"

"On the day she agreed to pay twelve shillings a week for her board and lodging."

"Did you give her a receipt for the money?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did she inform you of her own accord that her name was Mary Lee?"

"It came out in this way, sir. When I wrote out the first receipt I wanted to put her name in, and I asked what it was."

"Did she reply immediately, or did she seem to hesitate before she answered?"

"Well, sir, she seemed to hesitate a little."

"At the time did you think this rather strange?"

"I didn't think much about it, sir."

"Did any person call to see her at your house? Keep within the limit of the month."

"No one, sir, all that time."

"She was an entire stranger in the village, and quite alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did it not strike you as singular that a lady so well bred should voluntarily choose to live in a part of the country where she was so entirely friendless and unknown?"

"It did at times, sir, and I don't mind saying I was curious about her. But I said to myself she has gone through some great trouble, and I won't make it worse by being inquisitive; perhaps one day she will open her heart to me. Nobody can call me a busy-body, sir."

"All the better for you. You saw she had gone through some great trouble?"

"That was what I thought."

"Was she at any time light-hearted or cheerful?"

"Neither one nor t'other, sir. She was always very, very quiet, and I scarcely ever saw her smile."

"The paintings she made for you of views in Brentingham Forest and of Rocky Reaches—were they done in your house?"

"Oh, no, sir. She went to the places themselves, and painted them there."

"Did she go to those places frequently?"

"Many and many a day she'd spend hours and hours there."

"Did anyone accompany her?"

"No one, sir. Jimmy was at school, my husband was at work, and I had enough to do in the house."

"She went alone?"

"Yes, sir. Only once, at the end of the month we've been speaking of——"

"Don't stop. We will proceed now with what occurred after that time. Once at the end of the month—what happened then?"

"She had been out all day, and when Jimmy came home I sent him to look for her. He was gone a long time, and it was six o'clock before they came back together."

"Did you notice anything unusual in her appearance?"

"She was white as a ghost, and trembling like a leaf."

"Anything else?"

"Her clothes were quite wet."

"Where did your son say he found her?"

"At Rocky Reaches."

"Did she account for her condition?"

"She said she had fallen into the water."

"Did you believe she spoke the truth?"

"I don't know how to answer you, sir. I was distressed about her, and when I'd put her to bed I said: 'My dear, I wish you'd let me write to your friends to come to you.'"

"What was her reply?"

"She cried, 'No, no! For God's sake, no!'"

"When you heard that you knew she was suffering?"

"I knew it all the time, poor soul!"

"But her words then particularly impressed you?"

"Yes, they did."

"Was she ill after that?"

"Very ill, sir. She didn't leave her bed for three or four weeks."

"What was her ailment?"

"She had brain fever."

"You called a doctor in?"

"Yes, sir, Dr. Martin."

"Did he declare her to be in danger?"

"He said there was danger, and that if she got worse her friends ought to be written to."

"Was that remark made in the prisoner's room while she was in bed?"

"It was, sir."

"Did she hear it?"

"I can't say, sir. She was lying with her eyes closed."

"Was she awake at the time?"

"I can't tell you that for certain either, sir."

"From what transpired after the doctor's departure, did you think it probable that the prisoner must have been sensible while the doctor was speaking, and that she understood what he said?"

"It almost looked like it, sir."

"Describe what made it look like it."

"Thinking the young lady was asleep I left the room to get my husband's tea ready, and I was downstairs for an hour and more. When I went upstairs again I noticed that some papers had been burnt while I was away; the ashes were in the grate, and no one else could have done it but the poor lady who was lying almost at death's door."

"The presumption is that, during your absence, she destroyed all written evidence in her possession which would have led to her friends being sent for?"

"I thought so, sir."

"One question respecting her visits to Brentingham Forest and Rocky Reaches, and especially as to her visit to the latter place on the day in question. Were you aware that she was in the habit of meeting any person there?"

"I was not, sir."

"It might have been?"

"Certainly it might have been."

"Now, during the period that Dr. Martin was attending the prisoner in this illness, did he make a particular communication to you?"

"He did, sir."

"He asked you first an important question?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was it?"

"Whether the poor lady was married. I said I did not know."

"And afterwards he made the communication to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you say to him?"

"I begged him not to mention it to anyone else, and he promised he wouldn't unless it was necessary."

"Did you yourself mention it to any person?"

"Not while the poor lady was ill."

"Not even to your husband?"

"No, sir."

"You waited till the prisoner got well?"

"Yes, sir."

"And then?"

"I told her, as gently as I could, what the doctor said."

"How did she receive the disclosure?"

"She burst into tears, and begged me to keep her secret. I said it was a secret that could not be kept very long. 'Promise me,' she begged, 'that you will say nothing to anybody for a week.' I promised her at once, and she thanked me again and again, and kept kissing my hand. It made me ashamed. She went about the house, after that, quieter than ever, and with a face so full of grief that it almost broke my heart to look at her. Hers was; she told me so. 'Cheer up, my dear,' I said to her; 'you'll get over your trouble, and everything will come right. There are happy

days in store for you yet.' 'Never, never, never!' she sobbed. 'There is no happiness in this world for me. My heart is broken!'"

These pathetic words, spoken with intense feeling by a witness whose sympathies were so entirely with the unfortunate prisoner against whom she was probably giving fatal evidence, deeply affected every person who heard them. Especially was this noticeable in the counsel for the defence, whose agitation was visible to all.

It being now five o'clock, the court adjourned.

CHAPTER II.

THE FRIENDS.

At half-past seven on the same evening Mr. Molesworth, counsel for the defence, was sitting at a table in a private room in the Waverley Arms, with a mass of papers before him which he had been poring over for the last hour. He had hurried from the court to the hotel, and having partaken of dinner, which he ate sparingly and with the air of a man who had more important matters to occupy his attention than eating and drinking, had retired to his private room for the purpose of devoting his attention to the case upon which he was engaged. The documents consisted of letters, telegrams, and memoranda jotted down, apparently at odd times, on any chance scraps of paper that were available at the moment they suggested themselves. After awhile Mr. Molesworth pushed the papers aside, leaving exposed the photograph of a young girl, upon which he gazed so earnestly as to betoken that he was stirred by a deeper feeling than the mere relation between counsel and client could ordinarily arouse.

The photograph was that of the prisoner he was defending, who was on her trial for the murder of her infant child by wilful drowning in Rocky Reaches.

A beautiful face, childlike, radiant, and distinguished by a simplicity so sweet and attractive that it seemed incredible that the original, under any possible circum-

stances, could have been guilty of a crime so horrible. But in the mind of every person who was at all conversant with the particulars of the case, and whose judgment was not warped by sympathy and pity for the fair young creature, there existed no doubt as to the issue of the trial. She was guilty. Although the verdict was not yet pronounced, the beautiful girl was already condemned.

Mr. Molesworth's absorbed and earnest gaze conjured up pictures of the past which agitated him so powerfully that he set his teeth and clenched and unclenched his hands in agony. Suddenly he rose to his feet, wresting his passion from the grooves into which it was leading him. It was the effort of a strong nature asserting itself and recalling him to the stern and apparently hopeless task he had voluntarily undertaken.

"This will never do," he muttered; "it will unman me!"

He glanced at the clock; the hands pointed to ten minutes to eight.

"In ten minutes he will be here," he said. "In ten minutes, in ten minutes."

He had taken a telegram from the table, which he read while he spoke. It ran:

"At eight o'clock I will be with you. ANDREW."

The words had scarcely passed his lips when he heard the sound of steps in the passage. Throwing open the door he saw two men, one a waiter employed in the hotel, the other a visitor who was being shown to his room.

Dismissing the waiter, Mr. Molesworth pulled his visitor into the room, and, closing the door, looked anxiously into his face, endeavouring to read there

whether the news he was about to hear was good or bad.

"I am before my time, you see," said Andrew Denver, clasping his friend's hand.

"I see, I see," said Mr. Molesworth impatiently. "Well, Andrew?"

"There is no positive news, but before this time to-morrow night I hope to make a more satisfactory report. The men I have employed are on his track, and are confident that some time to-morrow they will run him down."

Mr. Molesworth put his hand to his forehead, and walked feverishly about the room, muttering, "Some time to-morrow—some time to-morrow! When life and death hang upon every moment!"

"You must be patient, Dick."

"I will, I will, as patient as I can be. I know you are doing everything that is possible to be done, but I am torn to pieces with grief and indignation. It is as much as I can do to control myself in court, to prevent myself starting up and crying, 'Can you not see that you are acting the part of executioners? Look into the eyes of this suffering angel, and tell me whether there is anything depicted there but innocence and despair? She is innocent, she is innocent! End this cruel farce, and proclaim her so!"

"But you restrain yourself, Dick," said Mr. Denver, in an affectionate tone. "It is only to me, or when you are alone, that you give way."

"It is true. Outwardly I am calm; inwardly there burns a consuming fire."

"How has the trial gone? As I came here I heard the woman she lodged with is still under examination."

"The prosecution is not half through with her. She is giving fatal evidence, and all the time she is answering the questions put to her, her heart goes out to the poor victim. My poor Madge, my poor Madge! Mrs. Tregartin is an honest woman, and would not hesitate to make her evidence favourable, if she saw a way. Everyone in the court perceives it, and it adds a crushing strength to what she says. The net is closing round my darling, and though I weigh every word that is uttered I cannot hope to shake the evidence."

"What do the lawyers say?"

"What can they say? They pity and condemn her. They avoid my looks; they cannot offer me a suggestion."

"Look here, Dick. If it should happen that my men lose the scent for a few hours, and cannot report satisfactorily to-morrow, you must do everything in your power to prolong the trial."

"It shall be done. They know I am fighting a losing battle, and they will grant me indulgence. But you torture me! Is there any fear of their failing?"

"I think not, but I wish to provide for contingencies. Have you had an interview with her since I left?"

"If it can be called an interview. I was with her last evening, and entreated her to give me some information which might assist me in my defence. She would not speak. I begged, I implored, I recalled old times, and still she would not speak. She was dumb with despair and shame. At length something I said unloosened her tongue. 'You are increasing my sufferings,' she sobbed—poor child! as if I would not shed my heart's blood to save her one pang!—'You are

increasing my sufferings,' she sobbed. 'Leave me to my misery. I am not worthy of your goodness. There is but one refuge for me—death! Day and night I pray for it.' She repeated these words again and again. Then she begged me to forgive her, and went down on her knees to me, sobbing, sobbing, sobbing—— I must not think of it! I must be cold, cold as the inhuman monster who has brought her to this pass. As there is a God in heaven he shall not go unpunished!"

"I am with you, Dick. If not at your hands, at mine."

These two men were comrades in the true sense of the word. The professions of friendship exchanged at college were not the mere outcome of the exuberance of young life; there was a depth and sincerity in them which years of after association had proved. Richard Molesworth and Andrew Denver were both men of moderate fortune, and it was perhaps due to this circumstance that neither had made his mark, although one was thirty and the other thirty-one years of age. There is no incentive like necessity, and these friends had not felt the pricking of this salutary spur. Andrew Denver dabbled in literature, Richard Molesworth had never held an important brief. They had laughingly reproached each other for their lack of industry, and pledged themselves to serious effort, and then had fallen back into their state of happy indolence. And yet there were sleeping forces within them which, forced into play by that same spur of necessity which has made so many men famous, were capable of great results.

They sat together till ten o'clock, Andrew Denver

recounting all he and his agents had done, and then he took his departure, having to catch a late train in the prosecution of the mission he had undertaken on behalf of his friend.

"Depend upon me, Dick," he said, "and keep cool. I will leave no stone unturned."

CHAPTER III.

MRS. TREGARTIN CONTINUES HER EVIDENCE.

"We left off, Mrs. Tregartin, after your promise to the prisoner that you would keep her secret for a week. Did you keep that promise?"

"I did, sir."

"You did not reveal it even to your husband?"

"No, sir."

"Did he not speak to you? Did he have no suspicion?"

"No, sir. In some ways men are as blind as newborn kittens."

"At the end of the week what occurred?"

"The young lady told me she was going away. 'Where?' I asked. She answered me just as she answered my husband the first day she came to us. She didn't know where. She could never repay us, she said, for the kindness we had shown her—I wouldn't mention it, sir, but if I keep anything back you seem to screw it out of me, if you will forgive me for saying so."

"I have no intention to be hard on you, Mrs. Tregartin. We are assembled here in the execution of a solemn and painful duty, and, at all hazards, that duty must be performed. Proceed, if you please, with what passed during this interview."

"I told her not to say anything about kindness, that she had paid us well for what we had done for her, and

that, if we could afford it, we wouldn't take a penny of her money, but would keep her with us out of friendship, we had got so fond of her. She insisted that she would go, and I had to clap my back against the door, or she'd have done it. Seeing me so determined, she gave way, and went to her room and took off her things. Everything passed off as usual the rest of the day, though I was worried in my mind as to what I should do about telling my husband. It didn't seem right to keep it from him, and when he found it out, as find it out he must, he'd be sure to give me a good talking to; and serve me right. But we all went to bed that night without my saying anything, and nothing happened to disturb me, which may be was because we sleep like tops. I got up early next morning, as I always do, and when my husband was having his breakfast I took the young lady a cup of tea, as I'd been in the habit of doing lately. I went into her room, and it was empty. The young lady was gone. She had left the house in the night without our hearing her. I looked about the room a bit, thinking perhaps she'd left a letter for me, but I didn't see any. Then I ran down to my husband, but he was off to his work, and there was only Jimmy and me in the house. I thought I wouldn't make a fuss, but would just try to find her quietly, and bring her back, so that nobody but me and her should be any wiser."

"Had her bed been slept in?"

"No, sir. She hadn't even laid down on it, which made me think she must have gone away early in the night. I sent Jimmy to school, and went out to search for the young lady. I asked in the village, but nobody had seen her, and at the railway station, a fair three

miles from our house, the clerk didn't remember selling a ticket to any young lady like the one I described. Then I wentto Brentingham Forest, and searched a good hour there, but there was no sign of her, and I went home in the afternoon, after a tiring day, more worried than I can say. My husband saw the worry in my face when he came in from his work, and he asked me about it. I made a clean breast of it, and told him everything. He thought a little, and though he doesn't show his feelings as I do, I saw that he was regularly put out. At last he said, 'Mother, you know I don't hold with such things, and if we had a house full of children I'd like 'em to be all boys. But this isn't an ordinary case; there's some mystery about it that I can't get to the bottom of. Besides, she's got hold of me in a way I can't account for. She's run away to hide her shame, poor lass! Some harm'll come to her, and it shan't be laid at our door. I'll go and seek her, and if I find her I'll bring her back with me, if I have to carry her, and we'll see her through her trouble. As for the scoundrel who's brought her to this, I'd give half a week's wages to have just three rounds with him.' It isn't often my man speaks like that, and when he does it's a sign that he's thoroughly roused. He swallows a cup of tea quick, and with some bread-and-butter in his hand to eat on the way, out he goes to look for the poor young lady. It's ten o'clock before he comes home, and when I open the door for him there she is in his arms, without sense or motion in her. 'No time for questions, mother,' he says. 'I'll carry her up to her room, and you'll attend to her. If you want a doctor I'll go and fetch one.' 'Make a pot of tea,' I say. 'The kettle's on the boil.' When

he's gone I undress the poor child and put her to bed, and by that time she recovers herself just enough to say a few words in a low voice. I don't let her speak much, but I let her understand, once and for all, that we're her friends, my husband and me, and that we mean to keep her with us. 'Does he know?' she whispers. 'He does, my dear,' I say. 'And doesn't hate me?' she whispers. 'Doesn't drive me from his house?' 'The proof of the pudding's in the eating, my dear,' I say. 'Knowing everything as far as you've told us, he goes out to find you and bring you home, and here you'll remain till you find a happier.' While she's crying quietly to herself my man calls out, 'Mother, here's the tea,' and I go to the door and take it from him. 'Is she all right?' he asks. 'I think she will be,' I answer; 'she won't want a doctor.' I look up into his face, and he looks down into mine, and he pats me on the shoulder, and goes downstairs. 'I should have died but for him,' the young lady says. 'He's a man, staunch and true,' I say. 'All the world isn't bad, my dear. Don't mistrust us again. Don't run away from us again.' 'I won't,' she says. 'That's a sacred promise,' I say, 'and you'll keep it I'm sure.' I remain with her till she falls asleep, and then I go down to my husband, burning to hear what he's got to tell. He'd been over the same ground as I had, asking in the village for news of the young lady, and going to Brentingham Forest, without getting any satisfaction. Then he thought of Rocky Reaches, and went there. The tide was coming in, washing over the rocks in a nasty way, and it wasn't easy for him to get about. All at once he stumbled over something, and looking down saw the young lady lying insen-

sible in a dangerous part of the Reaches. It's my belief that she was right in what she said, and that she would have died if he hadn't come across her. She was quite unconscious, and he couldn't get a word out of her. He didn't waste a minute, but took her up in his arms, and carried her home. He knew she was alive, because she moaned and sighed now and again. That was all he had to tell me."

"Was the prisoner ill for any length of time after that?"

"I made her keep her bed for a few days, and when she got up she didn't seem much the worse for it. That was perhaps because she was easier in her mind about my husband."

"What account did she give of her proceedings?"

"She said she was frightened that she would bring trouble between me and my husband when he came to know all about her, and that that was the reason of her going away secretly."

"Do you think she was in her right mind?"

"She talked very sensibly, sir, although what she suffered was enough to craze one."

"Or that she intended to commit suicide?"

"No, sir, not that. It's my belief she went away entirely for my sake, and without any idea what would be the end of it."

"Rocky Reaches, which you describe as a very dangerous place, seems to have had a kind of fascination for the prisoner?"

"I think so, too, sir. She said to me once that there wore voices in the sea."

"This brings us to the month of February. Did she continue to pay you regularly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Receiving money from no one?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"She did not ask you to go to the village to cash any cheques or post office orders for her?"

"No, sir."

"But you went to the village on certain errands for her?"

"Yes, sir. From the time she heard that we'd been asking through the village for her on the day she was missing she never went there again. I think she was afraid that the people would look at her and say unkind things."

"What purchases did you make for her?"

"Linen and stuff to make baby clothes."

"She had made some articles of that kind before she ran away from your house?"

"Yes, sir."

"That was the work you mentioned that she was doing for herself, and kept locked in her box?"

"Yes, sir."

"After her illness did she continue to write letters?"

"Not so many as she used to."

"To your knowledge, how many?"

"Three."

"As she did not go again to the village, who posted them for her?"

"Jimmy."

"Can your son write?"

"He's only just commencing his pothooks and hangers, sir."

"Therefore he cannot read writing?"

"No, sir."

"That was why she gave your son her letters to post instead of you?"

"Perhaps, sir."

"Because she was unwilling that you should ascertain the name and addresses of the persons she was writing to?"

"Perhaps, sir."

"Until the prisoner's child was born you had no further trouble with her?"

"None, sir."

"What was the date of the birth?"

"The 15th of March."

"It was a girl?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was the birth registered?"

"No, sir."

"Why was this neglected?"

"The poor mother couldn't make up her mind about it."

"You had some argument with her on the subject?"

"I don't know whether you can call it argument. We spoke together on the subject."

"Who was the first to speak, you or the prisoner?"

"I was, sir."

"Relate what took place."

"I said to her, 'My dear, the baby must be registered.' She asked why it must, and I said it was the law."

"When did this first conversation take place?"

"I can't exactly remember. Baby was three weeks old, I think."

"What was the child called by you and the mother?"

"Pet."

"Proceed with the conversations concerning the registration."

"I think it was a week afterwards that I spoke to her again. 'Have you thought about the registration?' I asked, and she said no, she hadn't. 'But it is really necessary,' I said. 'Pet must have a proper name, and she must be registered before she is six weeks old.' I spoke very seriously, and she seemed alarmed, and asked me if there would be any trouble if it was not done. I answered I was afraid there would be, and that it would be a foolish thing not to obey the law. She asked me then to explain to her all about registration, and I told her that she would have to fill up a paper, and say on what day the baby was born, and the baby's name, and the names of the father and the mother. She was greatly distressed at this, and she got up and walked about the room, and looked around as if she wanted to fly from me and everybody. I tried to quiet her, and said there was no hurry for a day or two, as she could wait till baby was six weeks old before she filled up the registration paper."

"The child being born on the 15th of March, the six weeks would expire on the 26th of April, the day after she was drowned?"

"Yes, sir."

"What occurred, within your knowledge, between the 15th of March and the 25th of April, which had direct or indirect bearing upon this question of registration?"

"I wish you'd put it plainer, sir."

"I will endeavour to do so. After you had explained the matter to her the prisoner's manner altered?"

"Yes, sir. She was even more unhappy than she had been before."

"She was fond of the child?"

"She worshipped her, sir."

"Go on."

"I said to her that same evening, 'My dear, I hope you won't be offended if I ask you a question?' She said she couldn't be offended at anything I could say, and I asked her then if the father was alive. She turned her face away from me—it got scarlet when I put the question—and said, almost in a whisper, that he was. 'Then, my dear,' I said, 'if I was in your place I would write to him at once.' That was all that passed, and the next day she wrote a letter, and sent it to the post-office by Jimmy. Three or four days after this it was that I had to go on some errands, and I left only the young lady and Pet in the house. As I was crossing a field, taking a short cut to a house I was going to, I noticed a man, a stranger in the village, who was walking along, looking this way and that, as men do when they are not sure of their whereabouts. I didn't take particular notice of him, but things fix themselves in your mind sometimes without your knowing. I finished my errands, and walked home through the village, and stopped to have a chat with a neighbour. Then I heard that a man had been asking the way to my house, and I thought it might be the man I met in the field. I described him, and the woman I was talking to said yes, that was the man. I wondered what a stranger could want with me, and I

hurried back home. At a little distance from the house I saw the young lady at the door, with baby in her arms, talking to the very man. He was the first to see me, and saying something I wasn't near enough to hear, he walked away in the opposite direction. That showed he hadn't come to see me, but I asked the young lady the question, and she answered that the stranger had come to see her. I was glad to hear it, for it seemed to show that her friends had found her out at last, which I thought was the best thing that could happen to her. It hasn't proved so."

"Why do you make that remark?"

"Hasn't it led to this, sir?"

"I do not know. What causes you to think that there is any connection between the visit of this stranger to the prisoner and the case we are now trying?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you, sir. It's in my mind, that's all I can say."

"Did the prisoner acquaint you with the object of his visit?"

"No, sir."

"Did she inform you who he was?"

"No sir."

"And you did not enquire?"

"I did not, sir. I saw all along that the young lady had secrets she wished to keep to herself, and I wasn't going to torment her by prying into them."

"Going back a moment to the advice you gave the prisoner to write to the father of the child, did you mean that she should write to him with respect to the registering, and as to his name being put on the registration paper?"

"Yes, sir; and the child's name as well."

"The presumption, however, is that some of her previously written letters were addressed to the father?"

"One would think so, sir."

"And yet you are certain that she received no answers to those letters?"

"I am not certain, sir. I can only say that she received none that I know of."

While the last two or three questions were being put and answered, a telegram was brought into court, and handed to the counsel for the defence. He opened and read it:

"I shall have strange news for you this evening. Nothing absolutely definite is discovered, but it may lead to something. Make every effort to prolong the trial.—ANDREW."

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT OCCURRED ON THE 25TH OF APRIL.

"Now, with respect to the stranger with whom she was conversing. Would you say he was a gentleman?"

"No, sir, I should say not."

"A labourer?"

"Nor that either, sir. He was like a common man, more from the town than the country."

"Did the prisoner appear to be on friendly terms with him?"

"They seemed to be talking confidential like."

"Would you know him again if you saw him?"

"I'd swear to him anywhere."

"Was there, then, anything particularly noticeable in his personal appearance?"

"One shoulder was higher than another, and he kept hitching it up like."

"He took his departure quickly when he saw you coming towards him?"

"Yes, sir."

"As if he wished to avoid you?"

"I can't say anything about that, sir."

"Did you see him again?"

"Never, sir."

"Did it strike you that he was the child's father?"

"No, sir; oh, no!"

"The prisoner had the child in her arms while she was conversing with the man. Did he take notice of it?"

"I didn't see him notice the poor baby."

"Was there any change in the prisoner's manner after this visit?"

"She was lighter-hearted, I thought, for a little while."

"At about that time did anything occur to cause you to suppose that the prisoner was short of money?"

"I had the idea she was."

"What caused you to think so?"

"The last time she paid me she gave me only one week in advance, and I thought she took the last shilling out of her purse."

"Did you make any remark?"

"I said, 'My dear, I can wait.' She answered, 'No, Mrs. Tregartin, I will pay you now as much as I can.'"

"Can you give me the date of this last payment?"

"It was on the 20th of April."

"On the 27th of April she would have had to pay you another week?"

"I shouldn't have pressed her for it, sir."

"I am sure you would not. Did you make no extra charge for the child?"

"No, sir, but the young lady spoke of it once, and I said, 'Let it bide till by-and-by.' 'Very well,' she answered, 'till by-and-by. I hope I shall be able to pay you one day.'"

"Between the date of the stranger's visit and the 25th of April was the prisoner strong enough to go out?'

"Yes, sir; she got strong sooner than I expected. She went out a good deal."

"With her baby?"

"Sometimes with, sometimes without. When baby was asleep she would ask me to look after it till she came back."

"When she went out alone, was she absent for any length of time?"

"No, sir; she wasn't away long. She was anxious to get back, in case Pet should wake."

"When she took the child with her, her absences were of longer duration?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did she go to on those occasions?"

"I don't know, sir."

"She did not go to the village?"

"No, sir; she wouldn't show her face there, especially when Pet was with her."

"She must have gone either to Brentingham Forest or Rocky Reaches?"

"There was hardly any other place she could have gone to."

"You are not aware whether she went there by appointment, to meet any person?"

"I am not, sir."

"We will come now to the 25th of April. Nothing more was said about the registering of the child's birth?"

"Yes, there was, sir. On the night before——"

"That is, on the night of the 24th?"

"Yes, sir. On that night I said to her, 'Don't forget, my dear, that Pet must be registered the day after to-morrow."

"Did she reply?"

"She only nodded."

On the morning of the 25th of April you rose earlier than usual?"

"We was up, my husband and me, and Jimmy, at five o'clock. There was a cheap train to the Crystal Palace, and there was to be fireworks and all sorts of things. We'd promised Jimmy a long time to take him to the Crystal Palace, and we took him that day. The train didn't start till seven, but there was a lot of things to do before we set out, taking our dinner with us in a basket, and all that. Jimmy was in such a state of excitement that he woke us up at four, and wouldn't go to bed again when we told him, but set at the window, waiting for daylight."

"It was a fine morning?"

"Yes, sir, it was a fine morning, but my man said there'd be a change before the day was out. He's a rare weather-wise man."

"At what time did you start from your cottage?"

"At ten minutes past six."

"Did you see the prisoner before you started?"

"Yes, sir. I went into her room softly, and she and Pet was fast asleep. I wouldn't disturb 'em, but I just kissed baby, and came away."

"The prisoner knew you were going on this excursion?"

"Yes, sir; and I asked her if she could manage while I was away. She said she could manage quite well, and that she would take good care of everything at home. I left things as easy as I could for her."

"That was the last time you saw the baby?"

"The last time, sir."

"You arrived at the Crystal Palace, and spent a happy day there?"

"It wouldn't have been a happy one if I'd known how it was going to turn out. Nothing would have dragged me away."

"Did the weather change during the day?"

"Yes, sir; it got pretty bad, but we didn't mind, because we was under cover most of the time."

"At what time did you leave the Crystal Palace?"

"At half-past nine at night. We didn't expect to get home till one in the morning. There was an awful crush at the trains. It was a mercy we got in whole."

"As you travelled onwards did the weather improve or get worse?"

"It got worse, sir; a good deal worse. Before eleven o'clock there was a regular storm, and my husband said the wind was as bad as he ever remembered it."

"You reached home at what hour?"

"Not before two in the morning. We had to carry Jimmy from the station through the wind and rain. He was dead tired, and so were we. By the time we got inside we was drenched to the skin."

"Did the prisoner receive you? Was she waiting up for you?"

"No, sir."

"Did you go to her room?"

"Yes, sir; after I put Jimmy to bed I went to her door, and listened. I didn't hear anything, and then I turned the handle softly, but the door was locked. My idea was that the young lady had got frightened at the storm, and being in the house all alone with Pet, had locked her door."

"She did not usually lock her bedroom door?"

"No, sir."

"You believed her to be in her room, asleep?"

"Yes, sir."

"Relate what occurred the following morning."

"I didn't get up till late—past nine o'clock it was. My husband got up first, and as I turned in bed he told me to have my rest out for once, and that he'd look after giving Jimmy his breakfast and sending him to school. I was glad enough of the chance; it don't happen more than once in a blue moon, and I doubt if I should have got up at nine if it hadn't been that I thought of the young lady, and that there was no one to get her breakfast ready. So up I jumped and dressed and went downstairs."

"The prisoner was not there?"

"No; but I didn't think anything of that. After Pet was born she always came down late. I waited awhile, and as I didn't hear any movement in the young lady's room I went up to her, thinking she mightn't be well. The door was still locked, and when I knocked I got no answer. I knocked louder and louder, and then I called out to her, without hearing the sound of her voice. I got frightened that something had happened, and I stood considering what I should do, and at last made up my mind to go and fetch my husband. He was at work two mile off, but I thought that would be better than bringing in any strangers till we found out what was the matter. So I threw on my bonnet and ran through the rain to the place he was working at, only to find that he wasn't there, and had been sent a goodish distance for some roots. I trapesed home again as hard as I could, and went up again to the young lady's room, and shook the door, and cried out to her; but I might as well have called to

the dead. There was nothing for it, I thought, but to call in a neighbour to break the door open, and I was going to do that when I caught sight of a key hanging on a nail in the dresser. It was the key of the young lady's room. I opened it quick, and it was quite empty."

"As on the previous occasion, did the bed appear to have been slept in ?"

"It hadn't been."

"Was the room in disorder ?"

"No, sir, it seemed to me as if it had been tidied up."

"Was the prisoner's hat or cloak there ?"

"No, sir; nor the baby's things. Everything they used to go out in was gone."

"It appears to be certain that when you came home late in the night from your excursion to the Crystal Palace the prisoner and her child were already gone."

"That's certain, sir."

"Did you make any enquiries what kind of weather reigned in the village on the previous day ?"

"I was told there was a big storm raging. The water came down in torrents."

"During which storm the prisoner must have left your house ?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"By design apparently, as she and her child were dressed for walking ?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"Was it known whether any person had called at your house on that day ?"

"I enquired, but nobody had seen anybody."

"Was the prisoner seen out walking by any of your neighbours or by anyone in the village ?"

"Not that I heard of, sir."

"After discovering that the prisoner had fled with her child, what did you do?"

"What could I do, sir, but wait till my husband came home?"

"He returned at his usual hour?"

"Yes, sir."

"The rain still continued?"

"Yes, sir, a dismal, melancholy kind of rain."

"What did your husband do when you told him what had occurred?"

"Went out, as he'd done before, to look for the young lady."

"And, as before, he came back with her."

"Yes, sir."

"Without her child?"

"Yes, sir."

"On the first occasion he brought her home she was insensible. Was she so on this occasion?"

"No, sir. She was in a dreadful state of distraction. My husband had to bring her home by force."

"How did she behave when he set her down in your house?"

"She did nothing but cry, 'My baby! Where's my baby? Oh, my darling, my darling!' She ran up to her room, hoping, as I thought, to find Pet there, and then she ran down again, and would have run out of the house, but my man wouldn't let her. 'What has become of the child?' I asked of her; and all she answered was, 'Oh, my darling, my darling! Where is she? Where is she?' That was all I could get out of her."

"What was done next?"

"My husband told me to keep the young lady in, and not to let her leave the house if I had to hold her down. 'Listen to me,' he said to her. 'I am going out to find the child. You'll remain here till I come back.' She struggled with us, but she had as much strength as a kitten. I don't believe she'd had anything to eat for two days. When she stopped struggling my husband said to her, 'Where did you take the child? To the forest?' She didn't answer. 'To the Reaches?' he asked. Then she moaned, 'Oh, the water, the water! The dreadful black water!' 'You know what you've got to do?' my husband said to me, and I nodded and said she shouldn't leave the house. Then he went away, and didn't come back till past midnight. 'I can't see anything of the child,' he said to me. By that time the young lady, who had gone out of one faint into another, was quiet. She wasn't unconscious, but she had no strength left in her, and she kept moaning and moaning for her darling, and about a voice that whispered dreadful things to her. He spoke to her again, but she did nothing but moan for the child. At last my husband said, 'We can't keep this to ourselves; it's too serious; I shall go to the police-station.' He sent the doctor first, who gave her something to drink—he had to force it down her throat—and it sent her off into a sleep. Then a policeman came, and, after putting a lot of questions, told us we should get ourselves into trouble if we let the young lady out of our sight. The next day she was taken into custody."

"That is all you know?"

"That is all I know, sir."

CHAPTER V.

CROSS-EXAMINATION OF MRS TREGARTIN.

"I HAVE only a few questions to put to you, Mrs. Tregartin. From first to last, was the conduct of the accused in your house that of a gentle-mannered lady?"

"From first to last, sir, it was that if it was anything. A sweeter-tempered lady, with gentler manners, I never met in the whole course of my life."

"A lady who would not harm anyone in any way?"

"It wasn't in her, sir. I never saw anyone who was more considerate and tender-hearted. It wasn't only to us, sir, it was to every living creature—dogs, and birds, and every animal alike. She wouldn't hurt a fly."

"Even from them she won affection?"

"Indeed she did, sir. They seemed to know she was their friend. As for us, my husband and me used often to talk about her kind nature. It was that, and her manners always, and her being forlorn and forsaken like, that made us so fond of her."

"Your little son loved her?"

"Indeed he did, sir; next to us the best in the world."

"She had a good influence over him? She taught him to be kind to dumb creatures, as she was herself?"

"Yes, sir; and he got to look up to her as something quite different from other people. We've got a picture

book at home with a picture of an angel in it. He used to look at it and say, 'That is like her, mother."

"You speak of her being forsaken. You believe that she came to your house and sought refuge there to conceal herself from her friends ?"

"That was my belief, sir, and to hide her shame."

"You have seen mothers with children. Did you ever see a young mother fonder of her baby than she was ?"

"Never, sir."

"Did you ever have any fear that she would harm her child ?"

"It isn't possible, sir, that such an idea should have entered my mind."

"Even when she was accused of the crime with which she is now charged, you did not believe it ?"

"I did not, sir. If it was the last word I ever spoke it would be to say she was innocent."

"Can you give us any closer description of the man with whom you saw her talking at the door of your house than that one of his shoulders was higher than the other, and that he kept hitching it up ?"

"No, sir. I saw him only twice, and only for a minute each time, and he seemed to wish to keep himself from notice."

"That did not strike you as significant when you saw him ?"

"No, sir; but it does now."

"His visit being paid after you begged the accused to write to her friends, is it your belief that he came in response to her letter ?"

"That was in my mind, sir."

"His appearance generally was not prepossessing ?"

"Not at all, sir. He had a hang-dog look."

"Has it occurred to you that he was not acting for himself, but for some person who employed him and who kept in the background?"

"Yes, sir, it has."

"You are positive you would be able to recognise him if you saw him?"

"I am positive of it, sir."

"I am sensible of the fair way in which you have given your evidence. I have nothing further to ask you."

"Thank you, sir."

During the cross-examination of this witness an officer of the court had handed some article to the counsel for the prosecution, and had made a communication to him. As she was about to step from the box the counsel for the prosecution said to her, "One moment, Mrs. Tregartin, remain where you are," and then addressed the Judge:

"My lord, a discovery has just been made which may or may not be of importance. I ask your lordship's permission to interrogate the witness concerning this discovery. I presume the defence will raise no objection, notwithstanding that the questions I wish to put do not spring from the cross-examination."

Counsel for the defence: "We desire, my lord, the fullest investigation and the most searching enquiry. It is our hope that, before the trial is ended, some evidence which does not at this moment appear to be forthcoming—particularly as respects the man to whom the witness has referred—will be presented which will throw a different light upon the case. I may also have to ask for some indulgence which I trust will be granted."

The Judge (to the counsel for the prosecution): "You may proceed."

Counsel for the prosecution (to Mrs. Tregartin): "When the prisoner came to your house was she wearing any articles of jewellery, such as ear-rings, watch and chain, and that like?"

"I did not notice at the time, sir, but afterwards I did. She did not wear ear-rings or any watch and chain. All she wore was a brooch."

"An old or new fashioned brooch?"

"An old fashioned one, sir. It had hair in it, and there was a glass at the back as well as the front, with a portrait in it."

"The portrait of a lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"The portrait being at the back of the brooch, how did you happen to see it?"

"It was on her table once, sir, and I took it up and looked at it."

"Was the prisoner in the room at the time?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did anything pass between you and the prisoner with respect to it?"

"I said to her, 'Who is this, my dear?' She answered that it was the portrait of a lady she loved, and I saw the tears in her eyes while she spoke."

"Did she wear the brooch continually?"

"She always wore it, sir."

"Do you happen to know that she wore it on the day before you and your family went to the Crystal Palace?"

"Yes, sir, I saw it on her then."

"When your husband brought her home on the following night was she wearing it?"

"No, sir."

"How do you know that for certain?"

"I undressed and put her to bed, and as I took off her clothes I missed it. I searched for it about the room, thinking it might have dropped, but I couldn't find it."

"You can identify the brooch?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Is this it?"

"Yes, sir, that is the brooch."

"That will do, Mrs. Tregartin."

Counsel for the defence: "Do not go yet, Mrs. Tregartin." To the Judge: "I claim a similar privilege, my lord, to put a question to the witness which does not spring from the re-examination." To the witness: "You have told us that after the visit of the man to the accused she went out a good deal, taking her child with her sometimes, and that on those occasions she went either to Brentingham Forest or Rocky Reaches?"

"I said, sir, that she must have gone to one of those places, which were favourite places with her, as she never went again to the village."

"A further question was, whether she went there by appointment to meet any person. You answered that you were not aware of it."

"I was not aware of it, sir."

"Was it a warm spring?"

"No, sir; rather a cold one."

"Loving her child as she did, and being of the kindly disposition you have described, do you think it likely that she would have taken it out in such cold weather unless she had some more special reason for her action than that of merely taking an idle walk?"

"She always wrapped the child up warm. I had some baby things of Jimmy's that I lent her. But I don't think it likely she would have gone out on some days without a particular reason."

"Such as keeping an appointment with some person?"

"Yes, sir; such as that."

The witness then left the box.

"Call John Baldwin."

The witness came forward.

"Your name is John Baldwin?"

"That's my name."

"You are a police-constable."

"That's my calling."

"You have been searching lately in the vicinity of Rocky Reaches for some evidence in connection with this charge?"

"That's what I've been about. As other things was found——"

"Never mind the other things; you did not find them. Answer the question."

"I thought I might find something myself."

"You searched there this morning?"

"I was at it for more than an hour."

"You found something?"

"A gold brooch, with hair in it."

"Is this the brooch?"

"The identical article."

"You found it among the rocks?"

"In a cleft in one of the rocks. Tide's down, you see."

"What made you bring it to the court?"

"I heard say at the station that there must be a brooch somewhere belonging to the prisoner."

"From the nature of the spot in which you found it, do you believe it has lain there since the 25th of April, or only washed up lately with the tide?"

"It might have been one way, it might have been the other."

"Exactly."

Counsel for the defence: "I have no questions to ask you."

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWO SISTERS TREE.

During the adjournment, which took place after the examination of the last witness, the counsel for the defence employed his time in dispatching telegrams to his friend, Andrew Denver. The first of these telegrams referred to the personal description given by Mrs. Tregartin of the man who had visited the accused girl at the cottage. He was very minute in his particulars, and he concluded with the words, "I have a strong impression that if this man is found and brought to me I can make use of him to a good end. Spare no efforts to discover him." Another of the telegrams referred to the finding of the brooch at Rocky Reaches, and in this telegram Denver was also urged not to relax his zealous endeavours, as indeed was the case with all the despatches.

The first witness called upon the reassembling of the court was Mrs. Tregartin's husband. After the first questions were put, confirming the evidence already given by his wife, the examination proceeded thus:

"On the 25th of April you and your wife and son spent the day at the Crystal Palace?"

"We did."

"Leaving the prisoner and her baby alone in your house?"

"Yes."

"You returned late on the morning of the 26th?"

"Yes."

"And went to your work while your wife was resting in bed?"

"Yes."

"You came home from your work at your usual hour?"

"Yes, at six o'clock."

"Your wife had something to tell you with reference to the prisoner?"

"She told me that the young lady had disappeared, and must have left the house before we came back from the Crystal Palace."

"Upon receiving that information what did you do?"

"I went out to find her."

"Where did you go first?"

"To Brentingham Forest. I would have gone to the village, but my wife told me she had made every enquiry there, without getting any satisfaction."

"Why did you go first to Brentingham Forest instead of to Rocky Reaches?"

"I thought it was the most likely place to find her. She could get some sort of shelter there, though poor enough. At Rocky Reaches she could get none, and would hardly run the risk of giving her baby a soaking."

"There is no shelter of any kind at Rocky Reaches?"

"None at all."

"Where do Rocky Reaches lead to?"

"Straight to the sea."

"So that no person, knowing anything of the place, would go in that direction in order to reach a place of safety?"

"They would be mad to do it. There's no saying what a lady out of her mind would do."

"The prisoner was acquainted with the spot?"

"She used to go there sometimes."

"In the daylight?"

"Yes."

"She took sketches there?"

"Yes."

"So that she must have been familiar with its character?"

"Yes."

"You did not find her in Brentingham Forest?"

"No."

"Did you see any traces of her there?"

"It was difficult to see anything, it was so dark."

"Rain was coming down?"

"Steady."

"What induced you to go to Rocky Reaches to find her?"

"I went on the off chance."

"There was just a possibility of your finding her there?"

"Just that."

"Did you find her at once when you reached Rocky Reaches?"

"No, not at once. There's a longish stretch of rocks, and it isn't easy to get about on a dark night."

"Let us understand. When the tide is down, how far can you walk over the rocks till you get into deep water?"

"Half a mile and more."

"The tide was down on this night?"

"It was."

"Not finding the prisoner near shore you went out upon the rocks towards the sea?"

"Yes, and I called out to her."

"Proceed."

"As I was picking my way I thought I saw a figure moving in the distance. I stepped towards it, and made out it was the figure of a woman. I called out louder, and she rose upright."

"She was stooping when you first caught sight of her?"

"Yes. When she rose upright I made sure it was the young lady, and I walked quicker. She ran from me, waving her hands distracted like. Frightened at the danger she was in, I ran faster and caught hold of her."

"What did she say?"

"'Let me go, let me go!'"

"You kept your hold upon her?"

"I did, and I said, 'Why, where's the baby?' She cried, soft-like, 'My baby, my darling! I must find her, I must find her!'"

"Anything else?"

"Nothing else. She kept on repeating the words a hundred times it seemed to me. I couldn't get anything else out of her, and I thought she was crazed. I looked about, but saw nothing of the child. All the while I didn't let go of her, though she tried to wrench herself away, but she had no strength. All she could do then was to sob and cry and wring her hands. At last, as I saw nothing of the child, I thought the best thing I could do was to take the young lady home. I'm sorry to say I had to use force, she was that unwilling to leave the water. I carried her home, and

told my wife to take care of her, and then I got a lantern and went back to the Reaches to look for the child. After searching for a couple of hours I had to give it up. When I got home again the young lady was very ill, and I fetched Dr. Martin to her, and then went to the police-station to tell them the child was missing."

"Since then have you been to Rocky Reaches in the expectation of making some discovery?"

"Yes, but I haven't made any."

"A stranger once came to your house to see the prisoner?"

"So I heard from my wife."

"She has given you a description of this stranger?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever see, in or near the village, any strange man answering to that description?"

"Never."

"You are aware that, after the birth of her child, the prisoner paid frequent visits to Brentingham Forest, remaining there longer than she had been in the habit of doing?"

"Yes, that is the truth."

"Do you know whether she went to meet anybody in the forest?"

"I don't know anything about that."

"Is Brentingham Forest a place where secret meetings can be held in safety?"

"I should say it was."

In the cross-examination of this witness, counsel for the defence pursued the same line he had adopted with Mrs. Tregartin. He made no endeavour to instil doubts of the credibility of the witness, and did not touch the facts brought out in evidence. His questions were

framed so as to establish the kindness and gentleness of the prisoner's disposition, and to make it appear impossible that a person with a nature so sweet and amiable could be guilty of the crime of which she stands charged. Mr. Tregartin answered these questions as his wife had answered them, and, as his wife had done, he found an opportunity of testifying his unshaken belief in the prisoner's innocence.

The next witness called was the son of the last two, James Tregartin, a bright little lad, whose evidence proved a surprise to those engaged in the case.

"What is your name, my boy?"

"Jimmy Tregartin, please, sir."

"You go to school?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you read?"

"Large print, if you please, sir, slow."

"You cannot read handwriting?"

"Not yet, sir."

"You mean to one day?"

"Yes, sir, please."

"Do you understand what you did just now when you kissed the Bible?"

"I was to tell the truth."

"Will anything happen to you if you do not tell the truth?"

"I shall be burnt in hell fire, if you please, sir."

"You understand that when you kissed the Bible you took an oath to tell the truth about all you know?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"And that, if you do not, it will be a great sin?"

"Yes, sir. God will punish me for it, if you please, sir."

"Very well, my boy. Look around. Do you see anybody you know?"

"There's mother, sir, and father, and there's old Mrs. Tunbridge, as sells brandy balls, and Mr. Broad, the butcher, and Silly Thomas, and there's her" (pointing to prisoner).

"You know her?"

"Yes, sir; she lived with us and had a baby."

"She was very kind to you?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Did she ever ask you to take a letter for her to the post-office?"

"Yes, sir, more than one; and she used to give me a penny for doing it."

"What did she say to you when she gave you these letters?"

"That I was to put them in the box, and not let anybody look at 'em."

'You did as you were told?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Did she ever ask you to go to the post-office and bring back a letter for her?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did she give you a paper with writing on it when she sent you there?"

"Yes, sir."

"You do not know what the writing was?"

"No, sir, if you please."

"You gave the paper to the people who keep the post-office?"

"Yes, sir, if you please—to Miss Field, behind the counter."

"Did Miss Field ever give you a letter for her?"

(No answer; question repeated.) "You must tell the truth, my boy."

"Miss Field did give me a letter for her."

Mrs. Tregartin (from the body of the court): "Oh, Jimmy, and you never told me!"

Usher: "Silence in the court!"

Examination continued: "Did Miss Field give you more than one? Do not be frightened. Tell the truth, and no one will harm you. Did Miss Field give you more than one?"

"She gave me one twice, if you please, sir."

"And you gave them to the prisoner?"

"No, sir, I gave them to the lady."

"Did she tell you not to tell anybody if you got any letters for her?"

"Yes, sir, and I promised not to, if you please."

"You did not tell your mother or your father?"

"No, sir."

"Did they ever ask you?"

"No, sir."

"Can you tell us of any other letters besides those you took to the post-office for her, and those you received from Miss Field?"

"I oughtn't to, sir, if you please."

"Yes, my boy, you ought to, if there were any, because you have promised to tell the truth. There were some other letters?"

"Only two, sir, if your please."

"Two that you got for her?"

"I only got one, sir."

"What was the other one, my boy? Look at me, and not at anyone else, and do not be frightened at all. You will not be punished for telling the truth. What was the other letter you did not get for her?"

"The lady gave it to me, sir, to put somewhere."

"Not in the post-office?"

"No, sir, if you please."

"Where, then?"

"In a tree, sir."

"Where is this tree?"

"In the forest, sir."

"In Brentingham Forest?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"There are a great many trees there, are there not?"

"Yes, sir, thousands and thousands; but this is the Two Sisters tree. Everybody knows it, it is such a funny tree."

"What makes it funny?"

"It's like two legs growing upside down. And there's heads on the top, with eyes in them."

"Is there a hole in this tree?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"And she told you to put the letter she gave you into this hole?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"And you found the letter you got for her in this hole?"

"Yes, sir, with some stones on the top of it."

"She told you not to say anything to anybody about these letters?"

"Yes, sir, and I wouldn't say anything now, only you say I must."

"Yes, my boy." (At this point of the examination a paper from the counsel for the defence was handed to Mr. Tregartin, who read it, and immediately left the court.) "When were you sent to the Two Sisters tree, after or before the baby was born?"

"After baby was born, if you please, sir. Baby wasn't well, and she couldn't go herself, she said."

"I have nothing more to ask you, my boy. You have answered very well."

Cross-examined: "The lady taught you your lessons, did she not?"

"Yes, sir, of a night when I come home from school."

"Was she ever unkind to you?"

"Never, sir. She couldn't be."

"Did you do your lessons well?"

"Not always, if you please, sir."

"You made mistakes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did she scold you for them?"

"No, sir, she never did."

"Did she teach you anything else besides your lessons?"

"I used to kill flies, if you please, sir. She said it was very, very wrong, and I never did it again."

"She taught you to be kind to every living thing?"

"Yes, sir, down to the very littlest things."

"Did she ever hurt any living creature herself?"

"Never, sir. She couldn't have done it if she tried."

"You did not think it wrong to post her letters and go for them?"

"No, sir; she couldn't do anything wrong."

"That will do, my boy. You can join your mother."

The lad lingered a moment, and said timidly: "May the lady come with me, if you please, sir?"

"No, my boy, not just now."

The little witness left the box, and went to his mother in the body of the court.

"Call Dr. Martin."

The witness stepped into the box, and was sworn.

"You attended the prisoner?"

"On several occasions, when she was ill, and during her confinement."

"Was the child a healthy child?"

"Healthy, and well formed."

"Not likely, from any inherent disease, to cause anxiety to the mother?"

"By no means. There was nothing whatever the matter with it. The child was one a young mother would be proud of."

"From your opportunities for observation you would be able to judge of the mother's character?"

"Undoubtedly."

"You judged her to be a person somewhat superior to one living where she did?"

"In every way superior. A lady."

"Did she herself suffer from any particular disease or ailment?"

"According to my observation, from none."

"She was bodily healthy?"

"Perfectly so."

"Is it likely that her mind would be impaired by pain and suffering?"

"Not by physical pain and suffering. Nevertheless, it was clear to me that she suffered greatly."

"From some mental cause?"

"Yes, from some mental cause."

"With which you are unacquainted?"

"With which I am unacquainted."

"Did you ask her to confide in you?"

"I threw out a hint that it might assist me in my

treatment of her if she informed me of the cause of her suffering. She did not respond to it."

"Was her mind unbalanced?"

"No, but a secret grief was preying upon her."

"You consider her to be in full possession of her reason?"

"In full possession."

"And accountable for her actions?"

"Quite so."

"Up to the last occasion on which you visited her professionally while she was living with the Tregartins?"

"Yes, up to that last occasion."

"That last visit was paid on the night of the disappearance of her child?"

"Yes; Mr. Tregartin came to fetch me."

"You administered an opiate?"

"I did."

"To what cause do you ascribe her condition on that night?"

"To what had occurred with respect to her child, to physical exhaustion, and to mental distraction."

"But you would not pronounce her to be insane?"

"Certainly not. It is my opinion she had not tasted food for a great number of hours. That alone would account for her condition."

"You have seen her in prison since her arrest?"

"I have."

"Have you remarked anything in her which would induce you to alter your opinion?"

"Nothing."

"You believe her at the present time to be in full possession of her reasoning faculties?"

"I know of nothing that would cause me to express an opposite opinion. She is suffering still, but I should say, though appearances might lead an inexperienced person not to believe so, that she has a somewhat remarkable strength of character. That she should so steadfastly have preserved the secret which in some measure is a cause of this suffering is to me partly a proof of this."

"You would not ascribe it to an unreasonable obstinacy?"

"No. Rather to firmness."

Cross-examined: "Dr. Martin, is it not a fact that young mothers frequently suffer under delusions?"

"It is."

"During which they are not responsible for their actions?"

"That is the case."

"May this not have been so with the accused?"

"It may have been. Everything in human action is possible, but I understand we are speaking of what is probable, not of what is possible."

"It is my duty to examine this charge from all points of view."

"It is equally my duty to state frankly—and I beg you to believe without bias—the results of my professional studies and experience."

"I do not for a moment dispute it, and I am satisfied that you speak without bias. But I would ask you to consider: I may present a view which has not occurred to you. You have given strong evidence as to the condition of the accused on the night you were called in after the disappearance of the child. On what day, previous to that night, did you see her?"

"If you will allow me to refer to a book I have in my pocket I can tell you with certainty."

"I shall feel obliged if you will refer to it."

"It contains a list of my visits this year, with the dates. The last occasion on which I visited the prisoner previous to the night of the 26th of April, or, to speak more correctly, previous to the morning of the 27th—for it was past midnight when I was called in—was the 2nd of April."

"So that during twenty-four days you did not see her?"

"That is so."

"In that interval might not some change have taken place in the mental condition of the accused which would be destructive of the belief you have expressed?"

"It is quite probable. I can only testify to what I saw, and I saw no change."

"But your visit to the accused was paid after the event, and not before?"

"Yes, that is so."

"It is therefore probable that at some time or other during the interval of twenty-four days the mind of the accused might, from some cause or other, have been thrown off its balance?"

"Yes. I can only repeat that on the night of the 26th she was, in my belief, sane, and accountable for her actions."

"There have been cases of mental aberration lasting only a short time?"

"They are common."

"And upon those so suffering awaking from their delusion their minds apparently are in a healthy condition?"

"I have had experience of such cases."

"Leaving no trace of their previous delusion?"

"Apparently none."

"So that a doctor, not having seen his patient for twenty-four days, may be deceived?"

"Yes."

"As you may have been?"

"I am bound to say it is a fair presumption."

"I thank you, sir."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CLOSE OF THE PROSECUTION.

POLICE-CONSTABLE THOROUGH was called.

"You arrested the prisoner early on the morning of the 27th of April?"

"Yes. A warrant was made out, and I was sent to execute it."

"You acquainted her with the charge brought against her?"

"I told her that she was arrested for drowning her baby."

"Did she make any remark?"

"No, she was dazed—out of her mind. I put some questions to her."

The Judge: "A very improper proceeding."

"She made no resistance?"

"No, she came quietly enough, and didn't seem to understand what I said."

"On the following day you searched Brentingham Forest and Rocky Reaches?"

"I was directed to do so, to find some evidence of the crime."

"Did you find any?"

"Not in the Forest. I did in Rocky Reaches."

"What did you find?"

"A baby's hood and a baby's woollen shoe. Later on I found a handkerchief."

"Are these the articles?"

"They are."

"The hood is in two pieces. How does that happen?"

"I found the pieces in different places."

"Both among the rocks?"

"Yes."

"Near the shore?"

"Nearer to the sea."

"As if they had been carried out to sea by the tide and washed up again?"

"That was my judgment of it."

"You discovered no traces of the body of the child?"

"No."

"That is all the evidence you can give?"

"It is all I know."

Cross-examined: "You say the articles appeared to have been carried out to sea and washed up again. How did you arrive at that conclusion?"

"It was my opinion."

"Would not a heavier object, such as a human body, be more likely to be washed up than a light one?"

"I should say not. A body would sink; a hood and a shoe and a woman's handkerchief would float."

"Just so. But if the articles you found had been placed on the rocks they would get entangled among them, and might remain fixed there?"

"I've nothing to say against that, but who could have put them there?"

"It is your business to answer questions, not to ask them. Say that such light articles as these were placed among the rocks when the tide was low, and that the hood was torn in two pieces, and dropped in different parts of the Reaches, would it not be more likely that

the outgoing tide would not carry them away, by reason of their being entangled in the rocks?"

"That's not impossible."

"Are the rocks sharp and jutting where you found these articles?"

"Yes."

"Particularly so?"

"Yes, particularly so."

"So that the soft woollen articles, dropped there accidentally or purposely, would be likely to be caught on the jagged points?"

"Yes."

"Then the action of the sea, washing in and out, would, instead of completely detaching them, tear pieces from them?"

"Yes, that accounts for the hood being torn to pieces."

"Not torn to pieces. Torn in two pieces."

"Well, torn in two pieces."

"Examine the two pieces of this hood. Is the tear such as would be caused by a rush of water over sharp rocks in which the hood was fixed?"

"How can I say?"

"Once again I tell you that you are not to ask questions, but to answer them. Answer my question."

"I can't, with any certainty."

"I don't ask you to answer with certainty. I understand that you are as well acquainted with the peculiar characteristics of Rocky Reaches as any person in the district?"

"I've known it well, man and boy, for forty odd years."

"Just so. And therefore, to such a question as I

have put to you, your experience would enable you to give an answer of technical value."

"Well, I don't see my way to answering it as you want me to."

"I will come to the point by an illustration. You have a handkerchief in your pocket?"

"Of course I have."

"Say that you went to Rocky Reaches at low tide, and fixed your handkerchief in the sharp jagged rocks there, what would you expect to see of it after a lapse of several hours?"

"Hardly anything at all."

"What would become of it?"

"It would be torn to shreds. There might be a bit or two clinging to the rocks because they couldn't get away, and that would be the extent of what I should expect to find."

"Will you allow me to look at your handkerchief?" (Handkerchief produced.) "You are a prudent man, I see; you purchase your handkerchiefs for long wear. If you put it on the rocks at Rocky Reaches in the way I mentioned, there would be an end of it?"

"That there would."

"Take the handkerchief and the pieces of the hood in your hand. Which is the stouter material?"

"My handkerchief."

"Then how is it that the action of the waves upon the two articles would, in your opinion, have such a different effect—tearing the stouter, your handkerchief, to fragments, and the more delicate, the hood, only into two pieces?"

"I don't know. It is a matter of opinion; and I daresay you're right, and I'm wrong."

"But I am not an expert; you are. I have been only twice to Rocky Reaches, and that within the last three days; you have visited the place regularly all your life. Is it not pretty certain that the hood, the flimsier of the two articles, would meet with the same fate as your handkerchief?"

"Well, yes, it is."

"Examine the pieces of the hood again, and then pass it up to the jury. It is divided, is it not, by one straight tear?"

"Yes, it is straight enough."

"The edges are not more frayed than they would have been if the hood had been torn by human hands?"

"No, they're not."

"The hood, torn into two pieces by human agency, is very likely to have been fixed in the places you found them by some person, the intention being that they should be found as you found them?"

"Well, yes, as you put it so."

"The same with the woollen shoe, which is not torn?"

"Yes."

"The same with the handkerchief, which is not torn?"

"Yes."

"That will do."

Mrs. Tregartin, recalled, identified the three articles, the handkerchief as the prisoner's, the hood and the shoe as having been worn by the baby. While she was being examined, attention was directed to the circumstance that the handkerchief bore no initials, and that there was an appearance of letters, previously worked in a

corner, having been picked out. It transpired that this was the case with all the prisoner's linen, denoting the extreme caution she had used in concealing her identity.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the case for the prosecution was closed, and then the counsel for the defence asked for the indulgence of the court. He said he had not expected that the prosecution would have been concluded at so early an hour, and that he was not prepared to commence the defence until the following morning. No serious objection was raised to the delay, and the court, therefore, adjourned at an early hour, free access to the prisoner being granted to her counsel. In the minds of the majority of the spectators there was a general conviction of her guilt, and there was little doubt as to what the verdict would be. But two or three of the on-lookers were shaken in their conviction by the cross-examination of Constable Thorough, and they stood outside the court, with others, discussing the affair in the advantage of broad daylight, which also afforded them a better opportunity of seeing the legal luminaries engaged in the case as they filed out. Next to the Judge, who was gazed at with awe and admiration, the gentleman they were most interested in was the counsel for the defence, concerning whom certain rumours had got about; but it was some time before he made his appearance.

"He's talking to the prisoner," said a tradesman from the village; "trying to get something out of her."

"They do say," observed another villager, "that she ain't opened her lips to him since he took up the case. Here's Mr. Broad; he's got a head on him. Mr. Broad, what do you think of it? Guilty or not guilty?"

The three men now in conclave were Mr. Toogood, the chief draper of the village, Mr. Shortlands, landlord of the George, and Mr. Broad, the butcher. Mr. Toogood and Mr. Broad were controversial, their opinions being of the weathercock order; Mr. Shortlands was a man who always agreed with the last speaker. A few yards from the group stood Silly Thomas, also from the neighbouring village, with a dim hope that somebody would "treat" him, or would give him a penny to stand himself half-a-pint of fourpenny. When his sluggish mind was stirred by this yearning expectation—which was one of the few inspirations of his dull life—Silly Thomas would be known to hang about for hours, at the end of which time, if his thirst had not been appeased, he would wander away muttering unfavourable opinions of mankind in general.

"What do I think of it?" echoed Mr. Broad. "What do you think of it, Mr. Toogood?"

"If I was to say what I think of it," replied Mr. Toogood, "and I wouldn't say it to everybody——"

"Not likely," interposed Mr. Shortlands.

"I should say," concluded Mr. Toogood, "that I was shook."

"So should I," said Mr. Shortlands.

"What's shook you?" enquired Mr. Broad, with his head on one side and his legs apart.

"Ah," said Mr. Shortlands, imitating the action of the last speaker, "that's a question, that is. What's shook you?"

"It's what the lawyer for the girl got out of Constable Thorough—I'm shook by that. Before then I'd made up my mind; after then I hadn't."

"My case," observed Mr. Shortlands.

"Let's argue it out," said Mr. Broad.

"That's a fair proposition," said Mr. Shortlands, and, observing that Mr. Broad had put his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, he did the same.

"It's dry work here," said Mr. Toogood. "I've a notion we can do it better at the Waverley Arms."

"Not at all a bad notion," said Mr. Shortlands. "The girl's lawyer stops there, I'm told."

"We shall catch sight of him as he passes through," said Mr. Broad. "When a landlord's in his own public his customers stand treat to him; when he meets his customers out he stands treat to them." He looked at Mr. Shortlands, and Mr. Shortlands looked at him and shifted his legs uneasily. "That's the rule, I believe."

"Is it?" said Mr. Shortlands, for once not readily agreeing with the last speaker.

"If there's any doubt of it," said Mr. Broad, "we'll put it to the vote." He and Mr. Toogood held up their hands seriously; it was not a matter to be merry over till the motion was carried. "On the contrary? No, no, Mr. Shortlands, you don't mean to say you're going to vote against it?"

They were good customers of his, and Mr. Shortlands yielded, observing:

"You don't think I was going to, do you?"

Then their faces relaxed, and they strolled in the direction of the Waverley Arms, Silly Thomas following in their wake, thirstily moving his lips.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

THE prisoner and her defender were together. Close to the wall at one end of the room sat a gaoler, who being a kindly-hearted man, had placed as great a distance as possible between him and his charge. Moreover, he endeavoured not to overhear what was being said, and in this effort of self-denial he partially succeeded.

But few words had passed between Mr. Molesworth and the young girl, he entreating her to place confidence in him, and she replying, when she replied at all, in monosyllables. He did not address her by name; in the presence of a third party it would have been the betrayal of that part of her secret with which he was painfully familiar. In a low tone he continued to entreat her, and at length his appeals caused a revulsion of feeling with her. She did not look at him, but he knew by a motion of her trembling hand that there was something she wished to say. He inclined his ear to her averted head.

"I cannot speak," she whispered, "with that man in the room."

Mr. Molesworth went to the man and spoke earnestly to him. The man shook his head and said no; it would be more than his place was worth.

"There is no one in the adjoining room," said Mr. Molesworth, pointing to a communicating door. "Lock

the door of this room, and take the key with you. No person can then get in, and if admission is imperatively demanded, you can come forward and unlock the door. I don't know what your place is worth, but——"

He whispered something, and the man started.

"Do you mean it, honestly?" asked the gaoler.

"On my honour, as a gentleman," replied Mr. Molesworth. "Are you married?"

The man nodded.

"Does your wife live near or far?"

"About a mile away."

"Write her name and address in my pocket-book—here it is, and a pencil—and she shall have the money before ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I'll trust you, sir," said the gaoler, and he went to the door and locked it, pocketing the key, and then retreated to the small room adjoining.

"Now, my poor Madge," said Mr. Molesworth, "we are alone. Speak freely to me. There is no honour, no faith, no truth in the world, if I am not truly your friend. I swear it, by the memory of my dear mother!"

He attempted to take her hand, but she shrunk from his touch, not in aversion, but in shame and despair, and said, "No, no!" From that moment he did not attempt to touch her.

For a little while she was silent, nerving herself as it were for a supreme effort.

"Take courage," he whispered; "time is flying."

"I must ask you first," she said, endeavouring to keep back her tears, "do you believe me guilty?"

"No, as Heaven is my judge!"

"Others do."

"I will turn them before I have done. Your inno-

cence shall be proclaimed. Trust me, believe in me. As I am a living man I will do as I say, what I bend all the energies of my mind, of my heart and soul, to do!"

"How good you are, how noble! Oh, my poor heart! what must you think of me who have treated you so?"

"If you could read my heart, Madge, you would be satisfied. It is filled with pity and undying love." She shivered. "But I must not speak of myself. I implore you not to delay."

"Do they suspect who I am?"

"They have a suspicion that you are not passing under your right name, but they do not know what it is. But they may discover at any moment. For that reason, if for no other—for the sake of the dear mother who is mourning you—ah, do not weep! think of what we have to do—for her sake, to whom the shock of a sudden and public disclosure would be too terrible, be candid with me!"

"I will tell you something—not all; I dare not; I have taken an oath, and I will not break it—you will not, you must not ask me his name!"

"You shall be obeyed, Madge. If it is made known it shall not be through you, unless you so decide."

"I came to the village to hide myself. It was not at his request, although he urged me to go to some place where I was not known, that I came here. The one wish in my heart was to be lost to all the world. I was ill and weak, and I believed I should not live long. I prayed for death."

"My poor Madge!"

"I used to lay my head on my pillow, and pray that I might not wake up, that they would come into my

room and find me dead. Then all my misery and shame would be ended. It was wicked, it was sinful, but I did it. I could not help it. I am telling you the truth; I will not hide everything from you. It was three days before I reached the village. I had never heard of it before. Everything was so still and quiet that I thanked God for having directed my steps there. Without knowing where I was I walked on through the quiet paths till I came to Mrs. Tregartin's cottage. You have heard how I succeeded in obtaining a shelter in her home."

"Yes, I have heard. Do not lose courage, Madge. I listen with my heart."

"It was a happy home. She is a good woman, and has been a good friend to me. And see the trouble I have brought on them!"

"They do not look upon it as trouble to them. They love you, they sympathise with you; their hearts are filled with kind thoughts for you."

"I do not deserve their goodness. I deceived them, as I deceived everyone. I had a little money, and I reckoned how long it would last. I prayed that death would come before it was all spent, but the mercy was not granted to me. It was ordained that I should live and be punished for my sin. When I saw that the future was before me, and that even among strangers I should have to face it, I wrote to him, telling him where I had found refuge. After a long delay he wrote to me, a cold, heartless letter, saying he would think over what I had said to him in my letter. He bade me destroy his letters, and I did so, never intending to keep them. Before that I had destroyed every piece of writing that might lead

them to discover my true name, and everything I had that would betray me if it was found. I wrote a good many times to him, and then, and then—my baby came!"

The last words were rather breathed than uttered, and a pause ensued, broken by Mr. Molesworth saying, in his kindest and most gentle voice:

"Go on, dear Madge. Summon your strength. The letters you received were from him?"

"Yes, and after baby was born, I wrote more imploringly to him, telling him I had scarcely any money left, and that man Mrs. Tregartin saw was sent to me."

"As a messenger from him?"

"Yes, he was his messenger. He was pleasant and smooth-spoken at first, and he said I was to write no more letters through the post, or it would be his master's ruin, and mine would quickly follow. I met him by appointment in Brentingham Forest, and he showed me a tree with a hollow in it, and anything I wrote must be put in there, and I would find the answers there. The answers always were that I was to meet the man in the forest, and he would tell me his master's wishes."

"No one knew of these meetings?"

"No one but him and me. He never went to the village, and I do not know how he used to get to the forest and get away again without being seen, but he was very cunning and clever."

"Did he bring you money?"

"No, he always promised he would do so, but he never brought any. He used to say that his master was in great trouble because of me, but I did not know

how that could be. At last I became so frightened at the idea of being without a penny, and with baby to keep, that I spoke strongly one day to the man, more strongly than I ought to have done, perhaps. He was not angry, or at least he did not appear to be. All he said was, 'I will tell my master you have got a spirit, and that he must look out for himself.' "

"Tell me exactly, dear Madge, what it was you said to the man."

"I will, as near as I can, but I can hardly remember. I think I said that I should be forced, for the sake of the baby, to go to him, and that I could not bear the anxieties I was suffering much longer. Then Mrs. Tregartin spoke to me about registering baby, and I was more and more frightened. My conscience whispered to me that I must not think only of myself, that I must think of baby, and that I owed a duty to her. I wrote to him about the registration, and he sent me word that baby was to be registered in a false name; and that I would not have. 'Shall I tell my master,' he asked, 'in what name you will register her?' I said yes, that it would be in his master's name. I did not know what the law was, and I was frightened at the idea of doing anything wrong. Then the man came with a proposition to me. It was a wicked, a horrible proposition. I was to give up baby to him, and never see her more, never to ask for her, to be a stranger to her all my life. You must believe me when I tell you I cannot remember what I said to this cruel, unnatural request. All I recollect is that I declared I would never, never consent to it, and that it was the wickedest thing I had ever heard. Then came that dreadful day, that dreadful day and night! Oh,

merciful God! I see the forest, I hear voices calling to me, the pitiless water is breaking over the rocks!"

"Hush, hush! Calm yourself. You are speaking of the day on which Mrs. Tregartin and her family went to the Crystal Palace?"

"Yes, on the morning I had received a letter with only a few words in it, saying I was to meet the man in Brentingham Forest, and that I was to be sure to bring baby with me. I was glad that Mrs. Tregartin was to be away from home, because I had made up my mind, if nothing was settled on that day, that I would go from her house altogether, and make my way to him somehow. I had the brooch that was found afterwards in Rocky Reaches, and I thought I might sell it for enough money to pay for the journey. On the night before Mrs. Tregartin and her family went to London she had told me that baby must be registered the day after to-morrow, and I was frightened to wait any longer, and not do what the law would punish me for not doing. I did not put any faith in the man's promises; he had deceived me so many times that I could not believe him any longer. It was dreadful weather when I left the cottage with baby, but I kept the rain from her, and thinking that I might never come back I locked the door of my room, and hung the key on the dresser. Mrs. Tregartin would understand from that, I thought, that I had gone away altogether. Let me think—let me think!"

She passed her hand across her forehead, in the attempt to recall the events of that terrible time.

"I may be able to assist you," said Mr. Molesworth. "At what hour of the day was the appointment with this man to be kept in Brentingham Forest?"

"At four in the afternoon."

At this point the gaoler put his head in at the door, and said:

"Will you be much longer, sir?"

"Not very long," replied Mr. Molesworth, and then, turning to the unhappy girl, said: "Try to remember everything that occurred from the hour you left Mrs. Tregartin's cottage."

CHAPTER IX.

"CAN YOU FORGIVE ME?"

"It was raining hard, but I kept baby close to me, and she was covered up warm. There was no one about; I did not meet a soul on the road; I was glad of that; I wanted no one to see me. I went to the meeting-place in the forest, and waited. The man was not there, and I thought I was before my time. I had no watch, and the clock in Mrs. Tregartin's kitchen had stopped. Everything was very still and dreary, and I leant against a tree, the branches of which were very thick, and where I got some shelter from the rain. I waited and waited, but no one came, and I was so anxious and despairing that I think I must have worked myself into a kind of fever. I hardly know how to describe the next few minutes; I cannot separate the real from the unreal."

"Do the best you can, Madge."

"I will, I will. I began to sing to baby; that was real, I am sure. She was stirring in her sleep, and I was afraid she would awake. I went on singing softly to her, though I had little heart for it. I sang some foolish, hopeless words about brighter days in store, sang them with a broken heart, trying to keep back my tears. Suddenly I heard, or fancied I heard, a voice. It was scarcely more than a whisper, but the words that were spoken were quite clear to me, and seemed to be a mocking answer to those I had been

singing. 'Better if baby were dead,' the voice said: 'then all your troubles would be over. You would be a free woman, and no one would know what has happened.' I was dumb with horror. Was it a real voice or only my fancy? I turned my head timidly, and as I did so I grew faint and dizzy and blind. A vapour seemed to float about my face, and as I sank to the ground I heard the same whispering voice uttering the same words: 'Better if baby were dead; then all your troubles would be over. You would be a free woman, and no one would know what has happened.' I do not know how long I remained in this state, unconscious to all that was passing around me, yet not unconscious to the dreadful whispering voice with its awful words. There were other fancies. In darkness and blindness I was stumbling over dead branches and leaves, over stones and precipices, through rushing waters that whispered and sang, amid clusters of trees that swayed and murmured. Then must have come a time of oblivion, for if I had remained very long in the state I have described nothing could have saved me from going mad. My throat is parched. Can you give me a little water?"

There was a jug of water on a table, and Mr. Molesworth poured some into a glass, and handed it to the poor girl. She drank it eagerly, and resumed:

"It was dark when I woke. My mouth was burning, my eyes seemed to be on fire, and for a little while I could not realise where I was or what had happened. Gradually it came to me, and I recollected everything, from the time I left the cottage to my standing under the tree with baby, listening to the awful whispering voice. But baby was not in my arms; in my sleep I

must have relaxed my hold, and she must have slipped from me. I felt around, but baby was not near me. In great terror I rose to my feet, and then discovered that I was no longer in Brentingham Forest, but on Rocky Reaches. How had I come there? I had now a distinct recollection of falling into a faint in the forest, but none whatever—except for my fancies, upon which I could place no reliance, for they seemed to be but fevered dreams—of my coming to Rocky Reaches. I stumbled about, looking in an agony of anxiety for baby, but I looked in vain. Then I thought that I must have left her in the forest, and walked to the Reaches alone in my sleep, so I made my way back, and searched everywhere among the trees, without seeing a sign of her. Then I returned to the sea and the rocks, my despair increasing till I became almost delirious, and between the Reaches and the forest I passed the day and part of the night, till Mr. Tregartin came and found me and carried me home."

"You have no recollection whatever of walking voluntarily from the forest to the Reaches?"

"None, none! Only the fancy that at some time during my state of insensibility I was stumbling over rocks and sea, and through a forest of trees."

"And that journey you feel convinced was made only in your imagination?"

"How else could it have been made? Is it possible that, blind and sleeping as I was, and on a night so dark and dreary, I could have found my way? No, it is not; and yet I was there."

"You have forgotten nothing; you are sure of that?"

"I cannot be sure of anything. I have told you as

far as I know. There were thoughts afterwards—awful thoughts, that I have tried in vain to thrust from my mind."

"Let me hear them, Madge."

"I dare not. I dare not put them into words."

"It will be best, dear. You have told me so much, tell me more. Everything is not so dark as you imagine."

She made a movement as though to take his hand, but she did not carry out her intention; her own hand dropped to her side.

"My baby?" she whispered.

"I cannot say; I will not buoy you up with hopes that may prove false. I am groping in darkness, as you have been, but in the distance I see a light. Tell me of the thoughts which oppressed you."

"It was this," she said, so softly that he had to bend his head to catch her words. "That whisper I fancy I heard in the forest while I was singing to baby about her being dead, and all my troubles being over. The thought that came to me was that it was the voice of my own heart, and that I had done the deed. Tell me if it is true? Can it be true?"

"It is not true. The false accusation is born of your tortured spirit. Madge, dear, be comforted. It is not true!"

"Bless you for the assurance. It strengthens, it relieves me. Even if I had been mad it was impossible. I believe in an eternal God. I pray to Him for mercy and forgiveness. I could not pray if I were guilty. I could not! I could not!"

"Take comfort, my suffering angel. You are innocent, and I will prove you so."

"And Pet, my baby? Does she live, and shall I hold her in my arms again?"

"I do not know. There is some plot, Madge, to which you have fallen a victim. With God's help, with suffering innocence on my side, I will unmask it. You would help me greatly if you would tell me the name of that man's master."

"I cannot. I have sworn a solemn oath never to reveal it. I should be burdening my soul with another crime."

"Do not tremble; do not cry. Be calm, and answer me. The letter making the last appointment in the forest—you destroyed it as you destroyed the others?"

"Yes."

"No doubt exists in your mind that the appointment was made on the day and at the hour you name?"

"It is certain. The words were written, and I read them."

"The other appointments that were made were kept by him?"

"All of them."

"Punctually?"

"Yes, punctually, as near as I can tell."

"His master was in fear that you would name baby after him?"

"He was. The man made me understand that."

"Madge, if you had registered the name, would not that have been breaking your oath?"

"It would have been. I see it now; I did not see it then."

"He was fearful of exposure?" But to this question

the girl made no reply, and Mr. Molesworth proceeded: "You speak of a vapour floating about your face when you turned to see if anyone had spoken?"

"I felt it."

"It was strange and unusual?"

"Yes; I had never felt anything like it before."

"Even before you sank to the ground it made you faint?"

"Faint and dizzy. It took possession of my senses; everything swam around me."

"Have you ever thought that you might have been carried from the forest to the Reaches?"

She gasped, and turned to him with parted lips. The question came to her as a revelation.

"I never thought of it."

"But, certain as you are that you could not have walked from one place to the other, it is the only explanation that can account for your falling unconscious in the forest, and waking up on the rocks. Can you think of any other?"

"None, none!"

"When you awoke your mouth was burning, your eyes seemed to be on fire. I am recalling your own words, dear."

"It is what I felt. I cannot describe my feelings in any other words."

"Traversing that long distance in your unconscious state, with your baby in your arms, you must have stumbled and fallen?"

"I could not have kept my feet—no, I could not. There are parts of the forest where the branches hang low down. When you are awake it requires care."

"Madge, you would know the man again?"

"I could not mistake him."

Again the gaoler, from the inner room, came to the adjoining door.

"I cannot wait longer, sir."

"One moment only," said Mr. Molesworth, and the gaoler retreated. "There is nothing more you can tell me, Madge?"

"Nothing more." She raised her eyes timidly to his face. "Is there hope?"

"There is hope. I have a theory, but I must not reveal it to you. There is hope; keep that in your mind. Repeat it to yourself again and again, and let it comfort you. Providence has led me to this town to save you, to prove your innocence, to unmask the guilty. I will leave you now. Sleep well to-night, and think of me, pledged to set you free, with no shadow of crime on your spotless soul!"

He rose to go, and she also rose and stood humbly before him.

Suddenly she sank to her knees, and, clasping her hands, murmured:

"Can you forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," he replied in a choked voice. "You have been led away, deluded out of your true self awhile by false and specious words. Heaven forgive those who harbour an unkind thought towards you. I ask you only not to forget that I am to you what I ever have been. My heart is not changed; it will never change."

She clasped her hands over her face, sobbing, and so he left her.

CHAPTER X.

SILLY THOMAS DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF.

At the bar of the Waverley Arms stood Mr. Shortlands, Mr. Broad, Mr. Toogood, and Silly Thomas, whose patience had been rewarded with a pewter pot filled to the brim. He had also begged a pipe of tobacco, and he was smoking it. Daft and penniless, he was at that moment the happiest man for many a mile around. The truly happy state is hard to define, harder to arrive at; but this man of weak wits was enjoying it, and could even have defined it if he had been put to the task.

Having adjourned to the Waverley Arms for the purpose of arguing the matter out, they had applied themselves to the matter, and had replenished their glasses more than once. When Mr. Molesworth arrived at the hotel, they had reached a crucial point.

"Here," said Mr. Toogood, without the faintest idea that he in some sense resembled the Gravedigger in "Hamlet," "is a body, large or small. It is a body; whether a man's, or a woman's, or a child's makes no difference."

"I couldn't have stated it better myself," said Mr. Shortlands, genially.

His mind had been much relieved by the circumstance that he was not expected to stand all the drinks to his customers over a strange bar.

"A large body," said Mr. Toogood, "makes its own way to the water, and in it goes."

"Just so," assented Mr. Shortlands.

"A small body is taken to the water, and in it is thrown. And, being in the water, it is all the same whether it is large or small."

"Exactly," said Mr. Shortlands.

"How do you make that out?" asked Mr. Broad, by no means to remain passive.

"Ah," said Mr. Shortlands, "how do you make that out?"

"A solid body is a solid body," said Mr. Toogood. "Do you dispute that?"

"I don't," replied Mr. Broad.

"And I don't," said Mr. Shortlands.

"Do you dispute that the body must have been thrown in?"

"I would if I could," said Mr. Broad.

"So would I," said Mr. Shortlands.

"After that, the waves take it up. They wash in and out. Now, we all know what the water is at Rocky Reaches, and what the rocks are like. Here's a young woman, the prisoner at the bar, of slender build——"

"Of very slender build," put in Mr. Shortlands.

"To look at her," continued Mr. Toogood, "she has about as much strength as a feather——"

"Not more," said Mr. Shortlands.

"To reach a part of the sea," pursued Mr. Toogood, "deep enough to drown the small solid body of her infant she would have to go out a goodish stretch, and to go out, mind you, over sharp rocks that would cut her boots and flesh to pieces, figuratively speaking. Could she have done it?"

"That's what I call putting it straight," observed Mr. Shortlands.

"You've got a wife, Mr. Toogood," said Mr. Broad musingly.

"What of that?"

"That's what I should like to know," said Mr. Shortlands.

"A slender body," said Mr. Broad.

"She is."

"Mrs. Toogood's strength is re-markable. She can lift a sack of flour, and that's more than you can do, though you weigh half as much again."

"My wife's an exceptional body," said Mr. Toogood.

"Which we all agree to," said Mr. Shortlands.

"We must go by rules," said Mr. Toogood, emptying his glass and calling for another, an example instantly followed by Mr. Shortlands, "not by exceptions. Mrs. Toogood comes of a strong family, and she's tough and wiry. The prisoner at the bar is another sort altogether. You could blow her away." Mr. Shortlands illustrated this by a light puff. "What I say is, that she couldn't have gone out far enough to reach deep water. That being the case, she must have placed the body in shallow water among the rocks. What is the consequence? It would have been washed in and out among the rocks, played with, figuratively speaking, and would never have been carried out to sea."

"If any case could be put clearer," said Mr. Shortlands, "I'd like to hear it put."

"What I want to know," said Mr. Broad, "is what you make of all this?"

"It stands to reason," replied Mr. Toogood, "that the body would have been found among the rocks, with the hood and the socks. Not being found, where is it?"

He looked up at the ceiling, and Mr. Shortlands assisted him in the vain search.

"I deny the whole argument," said Mr. Broad. "There's no reason why it shouldn't have been washed out to sea and never washed up again."

Before he made this remark the counsel for the defence had entered the bar, with the intention of going up to his private room, but hearing Mr. Toogood's last words and Mr. Broad's reply, he paused and listened, without joining the group.

"Even then, Mr. Broad," said Mr. Toogood, "history's against you."

"A general statement," said Mr. Broad, "proves nothing."

"Ask Silly Thomas," said Mr. Toogood. "He's an authority."

The individual referred to pricked up his ears, and sucked in the last few drops from his pewter pot; after doing which he turned the pot round and round and held it upside down. It was but just, if he was going to be called upon for evidence, that he should be rewarded for it.

"It's empty," he mumbled pathetically. "Not a drop left to whet my whistle."

"Fill up again, miss," said Mr. Toogood to the barmaid. "Mild fourpenny, please."

With beaming smiles Silly Thomas took the first draught of his second pint, and felt himself in heaven again. He was not an authority in many matters, but his knowledge of the peculiarities and history of Rocky Reaches was admitted to be vast and profound. He had also, as will be seen, a special personal reason for being regarded as an authority in the matter under

discussion. The counsel for the defence edged closer to the group, and called for a glass of sherry, which he did not touch. His voice attracted attention to him, and the three sensible men of the discussing group nudged each other, and cast furtive looks of curiosity and admiration at him. He nodded gravely and affably at them, and moved his glass near to theirs.

"I am interested in what you are saying," he observed, "as I am defending the poor girl. Will you do me the pleasure to drink with me?"

Yes, they would, they said, and take it as an honour. In the twinkling of an eye their glasses were emptied and replenished, Silly Thomas's pewter-pot being also refilled, and then they "looked towards" their entertainer, and paid their respects to him in liquor.

"Why is this man an authority on the subject you are speaking upon?" asked the counsel for the defence.

"Tell him, Thomas," said Mr. Broad, and sympathetically urged on by the other two he bared his head, and pointed to a scar on a bald spot.

"D'ye see this slash?"

Mr. Molesworth answered that he did.

"It's a mark of Rocky Reaches. I was drownded there, and washed up there as a babe. A smallish babe I was, but they couldn't drowned me, try their hardest."

"That accounts," said Mr. Toogood aside to Mr. Molesworth, "for his want of wits. The rocks cut into his head, and washed them clean away." He added aloud, for all the company to hear: "But they couldn't wash you away, Thomas?"

"No, no," replied Silly Thomas, wagging his head; "I knowed a trick. They don't wash no one away."

"How many have there been in your time?"

enquired Mr. Toogood, prompting Silly Thomas for the general good. "You can count 'em on your fingers."

"Ah, I've fingers enough. There's been altogether, man and boy, five in my time. 'Tis a smallish village for five, but three come from afar, and that's no blame to us."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Shortlands. "The sea's free to all."

"'T ought not to be," said Silly Thomas resentfully; "they should seek their own. I can tell you the names. There's Farmer Solomon; bad crops crazed him, and he put a end to hisself in broad daylight. But he come up again, and was found dead, as large as life, among the rocks. He was number one; I remember him as a boy; he give me a whack with his hazel stick, and cut my head open again. 'There'll be a judgment come on you,' I said, and it come to pass. There was Mr. Redruth, a banker from London; he did it in the dark, and he's found among the rocks. He was number two. He had money in his pocket, the foolish man. There was old Mother Polworthy. She lived too long, and yearned for kingdom come. She was number three, and she was found among the rocks. There was a sailor man, name never discovered. His skin was like the map of the world, pricked in with a pin. 'Twas a sight; I saw it with my own eyes, and he was number four. Though he'd sailed the seas, they wouldn't keep him, and he was found among the rocks. There was Liddy Manifold's babe——"

"A case like the present," interposed Mr. Broad, addressing Mr. Molesworth confidentially.

"Liddy's remembered well. A buxom lass come

back home after running away. She was number five."

"Her babe was," corrected Mr. Toogood.

"'Tis all the same. Down she goes to the Reaches, and flings her babe like a stone into the sea. Back it came, and was found in the rocks. That's the way of the sea at Rocky Reaches; all the world might try, and all the world 'd come back again, and be found laying among the rocks. What does the Book say: 'The sea shall give up its dead.'"

Mr. Molesworth drew the other three men aside, leaving Silly Thomas at the bar filling his pipe from a packet of tobacco with which Mr. Molesworth had ordered him to be supplied. Thomas was more than happy, being conscious that he had distinguished himself. He could not remember the time when he had made so long a speech and had been listened to so attentively; neither could he remember the time when he had been so liberally treated as on the present occasion.

"The man is weak-witted?" said Mr. Molesworth, putting his remark in the form of a question.

All three nodded several times, and touched their foreheads with their forefingers.

"But you admit him to be an authority on the action of the waves at Rocky Reaches?"

"He is an authority," they answered.

"Is what he said true?"

"Every word of it."

"Are those five cases of drowning there all that have occurred within your experience? If I do not mistake, you are all from the village in which this lamentable occurrence took place?"

Yes, they answered, they all hailed from the village, and knew something of the prisoner and a good deal of the Tregartins. The cases of drowning cited by Silly Thomas were all they knew of, and, weak-witted as he was, he had described them correctly. Rocky Reaches was the one subject upon which he could be said to be sane, and in reference to which his word could be depended on.

"In every instance the body has been washed up?"

"Yes, in every instance. The reason of it is this." (It was Mr. Broad who was speaking now.) "When the tide goes out there is so much obstruction from the rocks that it goes out slow; the waves are broken up, and lose their strength. But when the tide comes in it comes with a rush, and seems to bring everything with it. That will account for solid bodies not being carried out too far, their progress seaward being necessarily slow, and for its being easier for them to be brought back again."

"The theory is a sound one," said Mr. Molesworth. "You are all kind-hearted and sensible men, and must feel anxious that justice should be done."

"I speak for the three of us," said Mr. Broad. "It is right and fair that justice should be done." Mr. Toogood and Mr. Shortlands nodded concurrence; they felt flattered at being drawn into confidential conversation with so eminent a gentleman. "We have daughters ourselves," added Mr. Broad.

"It is an important piece of evidence," said Mr. Molesworth, "this action of the tide on the spot where this lamentable event is supposed to have happened. I say supposed, because no body has been discovered, and a great mystery hangs round the case I am

defending. You, as men of discrimination and sound judgment, must perceive this."

Yes, they answered, still more flattered, they perceived it.

"I shall call the man Thomas," continued Mr. Molesworth, "but the fact of his being weak-witted will impair his testimony. You will not mind giving evidence in corroboration of the cases of drowning I have listened to?"

"Not at all," they said, and inwardly congratulated themselves when they were informed that they would be paid for their loss of time.

Then Mr. Molesworth took down their names and addresses, and shook hands with them. Just as he parted from them a hand was laid on his shoulder, and, turning, he saw his friend Andrew Denver.

"I have strange news for you, Dick," Denver whispered quickly in his ear.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. TREGARTIN MAKES A DISCOVERY.

THEY went swiftly upstairs together to Mr. Molesworth's private room, and the lawyer, almost breathless with excitement, pushed the door to, and said:

"Now, Andrew?"

But before his friend could speak there was a loud tapping on the door, and Mr. Molesworth called out, impatiently:

"I am busy. I can see no one."

"It's me, sir."

It was Mr. Tregartin's voice, and without further hesitation, Mr. Molesworth admitted him.

"Be as quick as you can, Mr. Tregartin," said Mr. Molesworth. "You can speak freely before my friend. You went to Brentingham Forest?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Tregartin, "and straight to the Two Sisters' tree. I looked in the hole, but saw no letter there."

"That is unfortunate. Did you search well and thoroughly?"

"I'll tell you how it was, sir. At first I didn't search as I ought; I looked down and saw nothing, and I put a stick in and stirred some rubbish about. Then I came away, and spent my time poking about the most likely places where a letter might have been put. I wanted to bring you something to help you and the poor lass on, but it didn't seem likely I'd be able to.

At last, after a couple of hours and more I gave it up, and had made up my mind to quit the forest when it came to me, sudden like, that there might be something in the hole that I'd overlooked. There was a lot of stuff at the bottom, to be sure, stones and twigs and that like. 'I'll clear it out,' said I to myself, and I went to the tree and set to work. Sure enough, sir, I found bits of paper that seemed to have had writing on 'em."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Molesworth, eagerly. "You have brought them with you?"

"I have, sir; but I want to tell you everything first. Looking at the pieces I couldn't make head or tail of what was written on 'em; they'd been beaten down by the rubbish, and soaked through with the rain, and it must have been a long time ago that they'd been put there, if ever they were put there at all. They might have been blown into the tree from somewhere else. They were so damp and shreddy that they almost came to pieces in my hand, so I gathered 'em together carefully and took 'em home, where I put 'em before the fire and dried 'em. Even then I couldn't make anything out of 'em, and I'm afraid you won't be able."

"Where are they?"

"Here they are, sir; there's been writing on 'em sure enough at one time or other."

"Thank you, Mr. Tregartin; I will examine them myself carefully. "He looked them over as he spoke, and placed them flat on the table; the pieces had evidently once formed portion of a written document of some nature, but time and weather had so worn the characters, that only the faintest tracings remained.

"Your eyes are better than mine, Andrew. Do you think that these fragments are part of a letter?"

"Undoubtedly," said Andrew Denver. "I can make out the words 'implicit' and 'ruin,' though the letters are not all discernible. Let me be a minute or two. I am a bit of an expert at this kind of thing."

They were silent while he was at work arranging and re-arranging the various pieces, holding them up to the light, and endeavouring to fit them in. His examination of one particular piece appeared to excite him somewhat, and he devoted a great deal of attention to it, his eyes glittering as if he had made a discovery of importance. At length he put it down, finding a proper place for it, and said:

"I think we need not trouble Mr. Tregartin to remain. It is likely he has done us a great service."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Mr. Tregartin. "Shall I keep about, in case you want me for anything?"

"Perhaps you had better," said Mr. Molesworth. "Would a strong magnifying-glass be of any assistance?" He asked this question of his friend, who answered:

"Not a bad idea, if you can get one."

"There's an optician's in the next street, Mr. Tregartin, where telescopes and microscopes are sold."

"I know the shop, sir."

"Take this order there, and bring back what is given to you. Here is a five pound note you can leave on deposit."

Mr. Tregartin departed on his errand.

"Have you really made a discovery, Andrew?' asked Mr. Molesworth.

"I believe so, Dick, and it strengthens the strange

news I have for you. Before I commence let me know how the case has proceeded to-day."

In as few words as possible the counsel for the defence related what had transpired in court up to the period of its adjournment, and also made his friend acquainted with the particulars of his interview with the accused girl. When he had finished Andrew Denver said:

"What were you talking about to those men in the bar downstairs when I came in? You all seemed to be very much interested in what was going on."

"I was forgetting," said Mr. Molesworth, and he described the conversation that had taken place relating to the cases of persons who had been drowned at Rocky Reaches.

"Yes," observed Andrew Denver, "the evidence in its way may be of importance. I hear Mr. Tregartin's footsteps outside."

He opened the door, and took a parcel from Mr. Tregartin, and bade him wait below. The parcel contained a microscope and a powerful magnifying-glass.

"This will suit our purpose, Dick," said Mr. Denver. "By Jove! there is no mistake about the writing now, as much as there is of it. Now, read."

With the aid of the magnifying-glass Mr. Molesworth had no difficulty in reading as follows:

. . . . "meet" . . . . "will tell y" . . . . "implic" . . . . "uin" . . . . "exposure" . . . . "life-long regr" . . . . "future" . . . . 'Harcou"

"It will occupy more time than we have at our disposal," said Mr. Denver, "to fill up the intervening

spaces, but there is sufficient here to prove the tenor of the letter, which was duly deposited in the place selected for secrecy, and by some accident was overlooked. It appoints a meeting in the forest with the man employed by the villain who betrayed the poor girl. The man will tell her his master's wishes, which she is to implicitly obey, at the risk of ruin and exposure to herself. If she refuses, it will cause her a life-long regret, and will destroy her future. Then comes the signature, 'Harcourt."

"His name at last!" exclaimed Mr. Molesworth.

"His name, and not his name, as you shall hear. By the way, Dick, where does the Judge put up?"

"Why do you ask?" enquired Mr. Molesworth, surprised at this sudden wandering from the subject.

"I have my reasons. Where?"

"I heard he was stopping with some old friends at a place called Fairview."

"Where is that?"

"I don't know. Let us get back to the letter, Andrew."

"Follow my lead, Dick; I know what I'm about. We'll have Mr. Tregartin up; he may be able to tell us where Fairview is." He rang the bell, and sent for the man. "You are well acquainted with Mr. Justice Richbell?"

"Yes, he and my father were old friends."

"Has he a decent opinion of you?"

"I believe so, Andrew. These are singular questions you are putting to me."

"They are all to the point, Dick." The entrance of Mr. Tregartin interrupted them. "Mr. Tregartin, do you know where Fairview is?"

"I do, sir. The Judge is staying there."

"So I understand. How far is it from here?"

"Nigh upon three miles; it's out of the town."

"You are acquainted with the road?"

"I know it well, sir. I'm calling in sometimes to Fairview to help gardening."

"We shall want you to drive us there by-and-by Before we go I wish to make sure that the Judge is there. You can ascertain that for us?"

"Yes, sir; but it will take a matter of two hours, what with walking there and back, and getting to know what you want."

"You must drive or ride, whichever is the quickest, and you can do it within the hour, perhaps."

"The landlord here's got a smartish trotter, sir. I'll drive if you've no objection, and I won't be gone more than an hour."

"Away with you, then. Find out for us whether the Judge is at Fairview, and if so, whether it is certain he will remain there to-night. If he is dining and spending the evening elsewhere, ascertain where it is. You must not come back without the information. Do you think you will have any difficulty in obtaining it?"

"Not at all. I know the servants at Fairview, and they won't mind obliging me. Depend upon me, sir."

Mr. Tregartin left the room rapidly, and they heard him clattering down the stairs.

"Good job we kept him," said Mr. Denver. "Where was I when he came in? Oh, I asked you if the Judge had a decent opinion of you. Dick, do you consider it good or bad fortune that he is trying this case?"

"Bad," replied Mr. Molesworth, gloomily shaking his head; "decidedly bad."

"Why, Dick?"

"Surely you know. There isn't a Judge in England with whose character the public are more familiar. He has earned nicknames which many say he deserves, and opinions are held of him which plenty of people, good men and true, Andrew, are ready to justify. He is inflexible; he is dominated by so stern a sense of duty in his administration of justice that the guilty may well tremble before him. On the bench he has no sympathy and no mercy; many say he has no heart, but I do not agree with them."

"He is influenced by no side issues?"

"Absolutely by none. Whether the person tried is young and fair, old and wrinkled, does not affect him in the slightest degree. The principle of justice is with him supreme, without regard to persons, and he is guided by it."

"Shakespeare's lines on mercy were not written for him evidently," said Andrew Denver. "That it blesseth him that gives must be to his mind something of a heresy. With a knowledge of his stern character the innocent must tremble before him as well as the guilty. Circumstantial evidence is often at fault, and no man's judgment is infallible, not even that of a Lord Chief Justice. You say that he and your father were on intimate terms. Does that imply you and he often met privately?"

"No; my father died before he was made a Judge; since then I have seen very little of him privately. We have met professionally, but not often, and it is from what he has said to me on rare occasions, when he has spoken of my father, that I infer he has a decent opinion of me. Excuse my impatience, Andrew, I can

scarcely restrain it. Is this talk pertinent to the charge my poor Madge is being tried on?"

"It is, Dick; so far as in me lies I am not wasting a word. There is a great deal to admire in the view you have presented of the character of Mr. Justice Richbell. When it comes home to one, as in this case of your poor girl, there is more to dread. And yet I seem to see that there is a chance of its turning to our advantage. Inflexible, you say. 'The principle of justice is with him supreme.'"

He repeated these words, previously uttered by his friend, with an air of intense thoughtfulness.

"Absolutely so," said Mr. Molesworth.

"As to his domestic affairs. What do you know of them?"

"Very little."

"Is his wife living?"

"No, he is a widower."

"What family has he?"

"Two children, I believe."

"Not young children?"

"Oh, no. His daughter, who is the younger of the two, is, if I am not mistaken, engaged to be married. I fancy I saw the announcement in one of the papers."

"You are not acquainted with the son?"

"I am not acquainted with either."

"As to these scraps of paper, Dick," said Andrew Denver, pointing to them, "I want your professional opinion. The writing is not distinct, but experts in caligraphy could give evidence upon it?"

"Certainly."

"Evidence that might have weight?"

"Yes."

Andrew Denver collected the pieces, writing a number in pencil on the back of each, and deposited them in an envelope, which he desired Mr. Molesworth to put in his pocket.

"You will want them to-night," he said, "when we go together to see Mr. Justice Richbell."

CHAPTER XII.

STARTLING REVELATIONS.

Mr. Molesworth stared at his friend.

"Are you serious?" he asked.

"Quite serious."

"Have you some mad notion in your head of making a sentimental appeal to his feelings? If so, you may dismiss it."

"I have no such notion. I put sentiment entirely aside. I rely upon the inflexible principle of justice by which you tell me he is guided. Unfortunately there is the individual human view, by which most of us are influenced, and which may make Mr. Justice Richbell less noble than you believe him to be. If this is so, we must do without him. Dick, I am about to tell of a discovery made in a very extraordinary way. Some persons would call it chance, some would call it fate, all would agree that it is a morsel of romance leading to a most important issue. For my part I do not pretend to judge, and in want of a better term I should set it down to coincidence. How many thousands upon thousands of small matters of ordinary life occur in a single city every hour of our existence, not one of which seems to have connection with any other! Two of these happen to meet, and a coincidence is established, leading sometimes to a vital result. Upon such slight threads do tremendous issues hang. We seem to be at

the mercy of an invisible power, which no forethought or cunning can struggle against successfully. Into this tragedy of your life and that of the poor girl you loved——"

Mr. Molesworth interrupted him with the correction:

"The girl I love, Andrew."

"Yes, dear old friend, I know your faithful nature; I have had proof of it. Into this tragedy is introduced an element which savours of humour: taken by itself, indeed, without reference to any other matter, it is distinctly comic. Do not look shocked; I am no more inclined than you are for levity, and I am simply calling things by their proper names. You know where I commenced my enquiry, and to what end I directed it. You desired to trace the villain who has brought your poor girl to her present awful position, and though I cannot promise that hands shall be laid on him within the next few hours, I have discovered that which is of the gravest import to him and to her. It is different with his emissary; him we shall capture—that is my belief—within the next two or three days, and when that is done some evidence may be forthcoming which may happily alter the aspect of the affair. How this discovery is led up to I am now about to relate. When I came to you last night the clue was in my hands without my being aware of it. The occurrence which supplied this clue is of the kind I have described as comic, considered by itself. A simple matter, Dick. I was walking along, listening to the account of his proceedings given by one of our agents, when a woman, followed by a number of persons, passed us in the street. She had something in her arms which excited the mirth and curiosity of those who were following

her, but she herself appeared to be in great distress. Her way was ours, and we followed in her track without any distinct intention. She came to a chemist's shop, which she entered, and as she did so I observed that the object she was carrying with such care was a monkey. Having nothing to do for a few minutes I lingered with the crowd of people, and heard the story of the woman's distress. It appeared that the monkey was a favourite pet upon which she set great store; they said it was a performing monkey which was exhibited at fairs by her and her husband. She was at home with the animal, her husband being absent, when she observed that the creature was in a state of unusual excitement. The cause of it was this. The monkey had obtained possession of a good-sized lump of pigtail tobacco, which the woman's husband was in the habit of chewing, and was eating it as fast as he could get it down. The woman endeavoured to wrest from the animal what was left of the tobacco, but the monkey frustrated her efforts, and succeeded in bolting the lot. Then the creature began to roll about in frantic delight, which, presently subsiding, left him in a helpless and deplorable condition of intoxication. In fear that he had poisoned himself the woman snatched him up, and ran with him to the nearest chemist, who, while we were standing outside his shop, was administering emetics to the infatuated thief. All this interested me but very slightly, and the woman, somewhat consoled by the chemist's assurance that the monkey was not permanently injured, was issuing from the shop when a man came up and seized her arm. The man was her husband, a travelling showman, I heard, and my attention was particularly directed to his appearance because

of his pushing roughly past me, and almost throwing me down. Well, I thought nothing more of the affair till the receipt of one of your telegrams this morning giving me a description of the man who had visited Mrs. Tregartin's cottage, and who afterwards had several appointments with your poor girl in Brentingham Forest. You described a striking peculiarity in this man's shoulders, that one was higher than the other, and that he kept continually hitching it up; you said he had a hang-dog look, and you concluded with the words, 'I have a strong impression that if this man is found and brought to me, I can make use of him to a good end. Spare no efforts to discover him.' The moment I read your telegram my thoughts turned to the incident of the tobacco-chewing monkey and his master. There was the very man. One shoulder was higher than the other, he kept continually hitching it up, and he had an unmistakable hang-dog look. These resemblances, added to the fact that he was an undeniably common man, such a man as would be most likely to be employed as a tool, seemed to convince me that he was the person you were anxious to find, and I set to work at once, keeping myself in the background, as being more likely to excite suspicion than an agent accustomed to such enquiries as I was making. Now, Dick, something else assisted me at this point, and this something was a woman's jealousy and anger. I have spoken of the woman who carried the monkey as the man's wife; she may or may not be his wife, but it is a fortunate circumstance that, this very morning, my odd-shouldered gentleman, after a desperate row with her about the monkey and other things which were disturbing her mind, ran away from her. She is

furious, naturally, and the temper she is in serves our turn. I have learned that for some time past she has been suspicious of him. He has been making secret trips, the object of which he has kept from her—this will account for his visits to Brentingham Forest—and her idea is, very naturally again, that he has taken a fancy to another woman, and has only been looking out for an opportunity to throw her over. How and by what artful means my agent obtained his information I did not enquire; time was too precious to go into minor matters; it is sufficient that we have obtained assistance that may be invaluable in tracking him down; and that is now being done. Further particulars, gained from her through my agent, settle any doubt that may have existed as to his being the man we want. He has been doing some work for a gentleman which he has also kept to himself, refusing to give the woman the slightest satisfaction as to its nature; and my clever agent wormed out of her that this gentleman's name was Harcourt. You have the name, without its last two letters, on one of the pieces of paper in your pocket. Thus far, therefore, you see that we made some progress, but there is still something of the utmost importance behind. The woman let out that although the gentleman who was employing her husband—for so she calls him, whether he is or not—gave his name as Harcourt, she was ready to bet, after the manner of her class, that the name is assumed. 'He wants to keep himself dark,' she says, 'but I'll make it hot for the pair of them. As I'm a living woman I'll find out what he keeps that bottle of stuff about him for.' 'What bottle of stuff?' asks my insinuating agent. 'I don't know what it is,' she replies. 'All I know is that it takes a body's senses away.'

'How do you know that?' my agent enquires. 'Why,' cries the woman, 'he's tried it on me, and sent me into a faint that lasted a good dozen hours; and what he was doing all that time the Lord only knows! But I'll know, if I die for it! When he's playing his tricks on me, he's playing with edged tools.' How does that agree, Dick, with the account your poor girl gives of her sensations in Brentingham Forest on the day she lost her child, of a vapour floating around her, and of her sinking to the ground in a state of unconsciousness?"

"It tallies exactly," said Mr. Molesworth. "Andrew, I can never repay you for the service you have rendered me."

"Success will repay me, old fellow," said Andrew Denver; "then you will be your old self again. It is a foul plot we are unmasking in which an innocent victim might have been sacrificed; but we will save her, Dick, between us."

"With Heaven's help we will," said Mr. Molesworth, solemnly, and after a pause asked, "What is now being done, Andrew?"

"My agents, assisted by the furious woman—whose fury may subside at any moment, remember; there is no depending upon some women's moods—are on his track. Once they come up to him he will not escape their clutches. Willingly or unwillingly, lawfully or unlawfully, he will be dragged here, before the trial ends, I hope. Things look brighter, old fellow. There's a trap just pulled up in the street." He went to the window. "It's Mr. Tregartin come back. He has used good speed. Capital, capital!"

He rubbed his hands, and threw the door open for Mr. Tregartin, who was running up the stairs. The man was flushed and hot, and spoke with panting breath.

"The Judge is at Fairview, gentlemen," he said, "and is not going out to-night. I got it from the servants, and they got it from the Judge's own man, who travels with him."

"Can you tell us if there is a dinner party at Fairview?" asked Andrew Denver.

"I didn't ask, sir; you didn't tell me to; but it doesn't look as if there was one. The house seems quiet enough."

"How about the horse, Tregartin?" asked Andrew Denver. "Can it take the three of us to Fairview, or have you used it up?"

"It will take us all right, sir. A better trotter I never sat behind."

"See to it," said Andrew Denver. "We shall be down in five or six minutes."

Mr. Tregartin sped away, and then Mr. Molesworth said:

"You have not acquainted me with the object of our visit, Andrew."

"I have left it to the last, Dick," said Andrew Denver. "All that I have told you relates to the tool. On the road I will tell you about the master. This much you shall know beforehand. It was not till after I had heard from my agent of the woman's suspicion that the master's name was assumed that a telegram reached me from another quarter in which enquiries were being prosecuted. She was right. His name is not Harcourt."

"What is it?" asked Mr. Molesworth feverishly.

Andrew Denver whispered two words in his friend's ear.

"Good God!" cried Mr. Molesworth.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. JUSTICE RICHBELL.

THE description the counsel for the defence gave his friend Denver of the character of Mr. Justice Richbell was correct. He was reputed to be the sternest and most inflexible judge in England, and although he occasionally exhibited a sympathetic interest in a witness who was giving evidence in a case he was trying, it was well known in legal circles that this expression of feeling was evoked by a sentiment—such as his appreciation of a nervous person who was speaking truthfully for or against the prisoner at the bar—which had nothing whatever to do with his final summing up of the merits of the case. Ordinary spectators were likely to be deceived by his manner when he was so prompted, experienced lawyers never were. His directions to juries were marvels of clearness; his analyses of evidence, sweeping aside all that was worthless and bringing forward the most microscopic points which were valuable as testimony, compelled admiration even from those upon whom he was inflicting defeat. Never by any chance did he indulge in levity or in those small witticisms which convulse legal benches, to the amazement of discriminative readers of law reports in newspaper columns; never by any chance did he allow himself to be led

away by side issues which are frequently introduced to disguise the weakness of a case. Justice, justice, justice, and always justice—this was ever his guiding star in the performance of his solemn duties; justice without fear or favour; justice without regard to consequences, to the ruin of lives but yesterday full of promise, to the breaking of tender hearts whose pulses were throbbing with agony at the peril of a sinner who was dear to them. He saw not the grey-haired mother who sat within a few feet of him, with her hands convulsively clasped, and her wild eyes fixed imploringly upon his passionless face; he saw not the sweetheart or the wife in whose ears his cold, incisive words sounded the knell of earthly hope; he saw only before him the white-robed figure whose minister he was, and to whom he had sworn to be faithful. It was said by many that he had no heart, and that he was one who could never have strayed from the straight path of duty and morals; and, to all outward appearance, this was so; but those who pronounced this opinion were nevertheless in error. And it is necessary here, while the counsel for the defence and Andrew Denver are speeding to Fairview upon the strangest and most significant of errands, to refer briefly to certain episodes in the Judge's early and private life, which will throw some light upon his subsequent conduct in the case of the hapless girl whom Mr. Molesworth was defending.

The Judge was reared in a home which may fitly be described as a home without sunshine. His father was a man of whom it was reported that he was never known to smile. Strictly upright and just in his dealings with his fellow man, he instilled into his son

the lessons by which his own life was guided. The lad's mother, originally more amenable to tenderer emotions, had gradually hardened into the likeness of her husband; she followed him servilely, gave up her judgment and her feelings to him, was led by him in every step she took, whether trivial or of importance, and degenerated into the mere echo of the man she had wedded. With this double example before him it is not to be wondered at that the young man took the colour of his surroundings, and became what he was when he was called upon to administer justice without leaning or bias. But this immovable view of his duty was also partly formed by an early experience which, had it been revealed to his father, would have shocked the stern moralist, and caused him to regard his offspring with scorn and horror. There was a secret chapter in young Richbell's life with which the world was not acquainted, and which indeed was known to only one person, with the exception of those who played the principal parts therein.

As Mr. Molesworth had informed Andrew Denver, his father and Mr. Richbell had been friends, the friendship between them being cemented while the young men were at college together. After they left college and the battle of life was commenced, they both formed an attachment for a beautiful girl of obscure origin. Beguiled by their passion, and with but little thought of the unwritten chapters to which it would lead one or both of them, they pursued her with their attentions, and made every endeavour to win her love. This incident, common enough in the annals of every age, was in progress before either of the wooers had thought seriously of settling down. Wild oats had to be sowed,

and they were sowing them in the usual careless fashion.

Fortunately for Mr. Molesworth he was vanquished in the contest; unfortunately for Mr. Richbell he was the conqueror. The girl, flattered and dazzled by the attentions of a gentleman, gave her heart to him, and they lived together their secret life of dishonour. Then came a time when it became imperative that the illicit intimacy should be broken off. The success of the young lawyer's career depended upon it. His ardour had cooled, his passionate love was gone, and in its place a spectre stood, upon whose forehead was written exposure and disgrace. For this young woman was not entirely a milksop; she was a creature of some determination, gifted with a sense of right and wrong, a sense sharpened by the position in which she found herself. He proposed terms, and she, now a mother, refused to listen to them, and boldly demanded that the promise he had made to her should be fulfilled. What did it matter to her that he was high and she was low? There were days when he had exalted her far above him, and to the promises he had made in those days she nailed her colours. But even had he been so inclined he could not, without fresh dishonour, have complied with her demand, for he had already, unknown to her, entered into an engagement with the lady who afterwards became his wife. Her family had great influence, and it was through this influence that he was retained on a celebrated case which was creating intense excitement in fashionable circles, and in which seduction was a prominent feature. In his unguarded moments he had spoken to his mistress, as all lovers do and will, of his ambition and his future; and when

it came to her ears, through the newspapers, that he was retained upon this case, she took advantage of the position, and, reiterating her demand for marriage, threatened that she would expose him in the event of his refusal.

How should he act in this dilemma? How could he release himself from the compromising web he had spun around himself? His union with the lady to whom he was engaged would open up a clear avenue to the realisation of his ambitious hopes, and the threat of exposure appalled him. Never in his life, before or since, was he so racked with fear and apprehension. His heart sank within him, and he endured a torture so keen and overpowering that it never faded from his memory. In his agonies of solitary communing he admitted the justice of the threat; his father's teaching had not been lost upon him; his conscience smote him, sternly and mercilessly; but he felt it impossible to yield.

"Wait," he wrote to her.

"I will not wait," she wrote back to him. "To-morrow I shall be in London, and you shall see me in court while you are pleading for justice to one who has been betrayed as you have betrayed me. I will rise and denounce you, and there are men who will take up my cause."

All that night he paced his chamber, groaning and clenching his hands and teeth, his limbs shaking as with palsy. For the first and only time in his life he flew to brandy for strength and comfort. The woman who was resolved upon revenge lived in the country, and had informed him that she was coming to London by an early morning train. The brandy he drank stupefied and rendered him insensible, and he awoke

only in time to hurry to the court and make his appearance there at the proper hour. He had not a moment for breakfast, and could not have eaten had food been set before him. Plunging his head into cold water, and none the worse for the brandy he had drunk, he made a hurried toilet, and hastened to his duties—and, he feared, to his ruin, for his will was paralysed with respect to the woman who was speeding to destroy him.

He looked around the court, which was thronged with spectators; some drawn by idle curiosity—frivolous women of fashion who run after any unhealthy excitement and are not ashamed to show their faces where scandalous disclosures (tempting morsels to certain palates) are to be made; some drawn by the growing reputation of the young advocate, who, it was whispered, was prepared with a speech and with arguments which would make him renowned in his profession. She whom he dreaded to see was not there, and, somewhat relieved, he rose to address the court. But ever and anon as he proceeded some resemblance in a face that flashed upon him from among the sea of faces caused him to falter, and it was only when a clearer scrutiny convinced him that he was mistaken that he regained his courage and self-possession. Ready to admire, those who listened to the masterly effort he was making ascribed his faltering to the emotions which overpowered him as he dwelt upon the wrongs his client had sustained at the hands of an infamous and titled seducer. So the day wore on, and when the court adjourned the young advocate's speech was not finished, but every one was saying that his reputation was established.

Yes, it was established, but a breath could blow it away; at the simple appearance of the woman he had ruined it would shrivel up, and leave him to the mockery of the world. But she had not appeared. Why? He inflicted further torture upon himself by inventing reasons for her delay. She was waiting till the last supreme moment, till all the resources of his intellect were exhausted in his indignant vindication of a woman who had been foully wronged as he had foully wronged another trusting woman.

The parallel was damning; out of his own mouth he would stand condemned; he was pronouncing his own death sentence.

It was due to his fertile and wonderful ingenuity that he should so refine his sufferings. The whole of the day he had not tasted food; he had not glanced at a newspaper; he had been so completely engrossed by his peril that he had avoided all companionship, and those who would have drawn him into conversation supposed his mind to be thoroughly bent upon the celebrated case he was conducting to its certain and successful issue, and left him in peace. He was wending his way gloomily to his chambers, when his friend, Mr. Molesworth, hurried up to him and seized his arm.

"What horrible news, Richbell! What a sudden and frightful termination to the hopes of a young life!"

Mr. Richbell believed that he was referring to his own downfall. The blow had been struck, then. All was known, his career was blasted. His head drooped, he put his hand before his white face.

"You may well shudder," continued Mr. Molesworth. "Have you seen her?"

"No," replied Mr. Richbell in a choked voice.

"Come with me," said Mr. Molesworth.

He had no strength to resist; in silence he accompanied his friend. They paused before a building, and entered it.

"There," said Mr. Molesworth, pointing with his finger, and looking down Mr. Richbell saw the form of the woman he had wronged and of the babe she had born to him. They were dead, killed, with others, in a railway accident as she was travelling to London to make his name a by-word and a reproach. Her purpose was foiled; at the last moment, when he believed himself to be lost, he was saved; the world, with the rewards of successful ambition, was at his feet—there, by the dead bodies of the woman and the child.

"Ah, Richbell," said Mr. Molesworth sadly, "I thank God the sin was not mine! I pity you from my heart—and pity you the more because of my firm conviction that no man commits a wrong without, sooner or later, meeting with his punishment."

Mr. Richbell did not reply, but the words sank into his soul and left their impress there; the picture of the fair young girl and her child—his child—sank into his mind, never, never to be effaced. In the solitude of his room that night he registered a solemn vow. His life henceforward should be without reproach; he would set ever before him the principle of justice, and he would not deviate from it, even to obtain a great worldly advantage, by a hair's breadth. He looked forward to the time when such a distinction as this he now enjoyed would be offered to him, and he swore that he would be just and true to his duty. On the following day he finished his address, and it was universally admitted

that it was long since so powerful a speech had been heard in a court of justice. Little did those who listened in admiration to the passionate and eloquent peroration guess that it was horror of his own sin that prompted his fiery denunciation of the wretches who went about the world corrupting innocence and betraying the unsuspecting. It was his own soul he was piercing; it was his own crime he was stigmatising as one which earned for its perpetrator the execration of mankind. There are natures which would have been softened by the exquisite relief brought to their tortured hearts by the sudden and awful death of two wronged beings. It hardened Mr. Richbell's nature. He would seek no excuse for himself by seeking one for other men who had sinned as he had sinned. It was by a miracle that he had escaped the world's condemnation; had he not so escaped it the verdict which would have been pronounced would have been a just verdict. As it was, he bore ever within him the punishment which Fate had averted. His friend's words had often recurred to him: "No man commits a wrong without, sooner or later, meeting with his punishment.' The picture of the dead woman and her babe came to him as in a mist, which he never failed to pierce until he beheld the still forms lying in space, above the heads of those who thronged the courts over which he presided. But up to the present day the prediction of his friend, long since passed away, remained unfulfilled; in its practical effect it was as intangible as the vision which was to haunt him to the last hour of his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

SANDY, THE JUDGE'S OWN MAN, STOPS THE WAY.

THE night was fine and clear as the two friends drove to Fairview. There was yet much to tell, and on the road Andrew Denver related to Mr. Molesworth all that he had discovered through his agents. It was a singular revelation, and a stranger would have been filled with wonder and curiosity as to the final development of the issues to which it led. Mr. Molesworth listened for the most part in silence to the relation, and his mind was busy upon the course it was advisable to pursue. So much depended upon the attitude assumed by Mr. Justice Richbell that he could not decide; what that attitude would be remained to be seen.

"The mystery is not cleared up, Dick," said Andrew Denver; "but we hold the threads." Mr. Molesworth nodded, and Denver continued: "Will there be any difficulty in obtaining an interview with the Judge?"

"I cannot say," replied Mr. Molesworth. "Generally when he is engaged upon an important case he secludes himself until it is over. But I am resolved not to leave Fairview to-night without seeing him."

"Mr. Tregartin mentioned something of the Judge's servant, who travels with him. I have heard that he is an eccentric."

"The term may or may not be applicable. That he is a character is well known, and the Judge places such dependence upon him. So much so that it will

only be through him that our errand will not be fruitless."

"You mean that when we express a desire to see Mr. Justice Richbell his servant will present himself?"

"Yes, and being in an absolutely confidential position he looks upon himself as his master's keeper, and decides without reference whether he can or cannot be seen."

"That is not an insuperable difficulty," said Andrew Denver, taking out his purse and shaking it.

"You mistake. Sandy is not to be bribed."

"That is the man's name, is it. When a Scotchman, which I presume Sandy to be, sets his back against a wall, it is a job to move him."

"He is Scotch by descent, but speaks with the slightest of accents. It is not his tongue, but his appearance, that betrays his nationality."

"Well, Dick, as we are determined to see the Judge, and Sandy stops the way, we are two to one."

"Sandy stands six feet two in his stockings, and has the strength of a giant."

Denver whistled.

"A formidable obstacle truly to men out of training, as we are. Have we much farther to go, Mr. Tregartin?"

"We shall be there in six or seven minutes, sir."

"Mr. Tregartin!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Are your muscles in good condition?"

"Fairish, sir. I can take my own part."

"To serve the young lady we are working for you wouldn't mind exercising them?"

"I'm ready and willing, sir, to do anything in reason."

"Good man! There, Dick, we are three to one. What becomes of your giant now?"

But Mr. Molesworth shook his head. "No, no, Andrew, we must find some other way. There must be no brawling. I shall devise a means. Sandy is as proud of his master's reputation as the Judge himself, and we will work him through that sentiment. The principal difficulty I see before me is that of delaying the progress of the trial till we get the two men your agents are after in court. We shall want the woman as well, most likely."

"She shall be produced, Dick."

"Here we are, sir," said Mr. Tregartin, pulling up at the gates of Fairview. "Shall you want me inside, gentlemen?"

"No, Mr. Tregartin," said the counsel for the defence. "My friend was only joking with you."

They pulled at the bell, and the gates were opened. Saying they had come to see Mr. Justice Richbell upon business of importance, they were conducted into the house. There another servant received their message, and departed to deliver it. Presently the Judge's man entered the room, a giant in stature, a Hercules in strength. Briefly Mr. Molesworth announced their errand, and received the reply that his lordship could not be seen; under no circumstances was he to be disturbed.

"But it is of the utmost importance," urged Mr. Molesworth. "We have driven from town on purpose to see him."

"I cannot help it," said Sandy. "No one disturbs him to-night. You must wait till morning."

"We cannot do that."

"It's not my business whether you can or not. All that I know is you must."

Mr. Molesworth took out his card, and wrote a few words on the back.

"At least you can give his lordship my card."

"I will give it to his lordship in the morning," said Sandy.

"It is imperative that he should receive it to-night."

"He shall not receive it to-night."

"To-morrow will be too late." Sandy shrugged his shoulders. "You are a bold man, said Mr. Molesworth, "to stand in the way of justice."

"You are a bolder man to say that to me," retorted Sandy. "But you cannot teach me my duty."

"We have not come for that purpose. You are doubtless acting in obedience to orders, and doing what you consider right. At your peril deny us."

"I do deny you."

"You have not looked at my card."

"It is for his lordship to do that in the morning."

"You are committing a grave error," said Mr. Molesworth in his most impressive tone, "and one which it may be impossible to repair if the night goes by without his lordship seeing us. I do not wish to appeal to the master of this house to take to his lordship the message I ask you to deliver, but I shall do so in the event of your persisting in your refusal. In that case you will compel me to disclose to a stranger a matter which is for his ears alone, and which vitally affects the honour of his name."

"No one can touch that," said Sandy, flushing up; but it was evident he was shaken by Mr. Molesworth's earnestness.

"You are mistaken. You can see that we are gentlemen, and that I am not speaking lightly. I repeat that it is the honour of his lordship's name that brings us here, that compels me to insist upon an interview without delay. Does it strike you that you are exceeding your duty in not leaving his lordship to decide whether he will grant us this interview? I tell you solemnly that we are here upon a matter of life or death."

Sandy was conquered; with a sour look he said that he would take the card to his lordship, but that he did not believe his master would receive the gentlemen.

"A tough customer," remarked Andrew Denver, when Sandy had departed; "I was getting out of patience with him, and in spite of his six feet two felt greatly inclined to try conclusions with the giant."

"You would have got the worst of it, Denver."

"No doubt I should, but it would have been a satisfaction to have had it out with him. He's a good old family watchdog for all that. Brace yourself up, Dick; you've a serious task before you."

Sandy returned with a face of amazement.

"His lordship will see you," he said to Mr. Molesworth, "but you must not keep him long. Not you, sir"—to Andrew Denver—"his lordship will see no strangers."

"I will wait here for you, Dick," said Denver, "and perhaps our friend will give me the pleasure of his company after he has shown you to his lordship's room.

"Much obliged to you," said Sandy dryly, "but I'll keep my company to myself."

Upon entering the Judge's apartment, Mr. Molesworth at once perceived that he was studying the case

he was trying. The table was strewn with papers, from which he looked up when Mr. Molesworth appeared.

"My servant tells me, Mr. Molesworth," he said, "that he could not prevail upon you to put off your visit. You may go, Sandy; I will ring when I want you."

"It is with difficulty," said Mr. Molesworth, "that I have obtained access to you; nothing but extreme urgency would have induced me to disturb you."

"You wish to consult me?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Upon some urgent business. Of a private nature?"

"Scarcely, my lord. It is business vital to you and to me, and I do not see how it can be kept from the public ear."

"Vital!" exclaimed Mr. Justice Richbell, leaning back in his chair, the palms of his hands resting upon the table. "And to me? You are quite serious?"

"I am, indeed, my lord."

"I should have preferred," said Mr. Justice Richbell, after a slight pause, "that you had waited till this trial was over."

"I could not do that, my lord. It is of this trial I have to speak to you."

Mr. Justice Richbell sat upright in his chair, and fixed his stern eyes upon his visitor's face.

"Out of court," he said, "I cannot allow you to speak to me of the trial. Surely you must know, engaged as you are in the case, that I can hold no conversation with you upon it."

"The proceeding is strange and unusual," said Mr. Molesworth, "but your lordship must listen to me."

"Must!" exclaimed Mr. Justice Richbell.

"Must," repeated Mr. Molesworth.

The bell rope was not within reach of the Judge's hand, and he rose and stepped towards it.

"I beg your lordship not to ring," said Mr. Molesworth.

"My servant informed me that you were troublesome," said the Judge, "and I was only induced to receive you by what you wrote on the back of your card. You say that your errand is one of life or death, but had I been aware that it referred to the case I am trying, on no account would I have seen you. Mr. Molesworth, I must ask you to retire."

"With respect, my lord, I cannot do so till you have heard what I have to say. Hold your hand, my lord, I beg. It is true that I come here in the name of justice, but we stand before each other as man to man. My desire is not to tamper with justice, but to assist it. You knew my father, my lord; he was your friend, and a man of honour, as I hope I am. It is not in my nature to descend to meanness or trickery. A sacred call is made to me, and I answer to it, as befits my duty. I ask you to do the same. In saying that my business is vital to you as well as to myself I speak the solemn truth. If I do not justify my words I will submit to any penalty, to any punishment, your lordship may inflict upon me. You are not only a Judge, my lord, you are a father."

"Does this fact also," asked the Judge, "enter into the business upon which you have come?"

"It does, my lord. It has a vital bearing upon it."

"A direct bearing?"

"A direct bearing, my lord. For your sake, my

lord, as my dear father's friend, I would it had not—for your sake I would that another man, and not one who is closely related to you, should have to answer the charge I bring against him."

"In as few words as possible," said the Judge, retreating a step, "without entering into details, describe the nature of the communication you wish to make to me. I must know that much before I decide whether I shall listen to you or not."

"I ask your lordship," said Mr. Molesworth, "to listen to a story of the past in which the honour of your name is involved."

A story of the past in which the honour of his name was involved! A vision of his early manhood rose before him. He saw the phantom forms of a dead woman and her child—he beheld the resurrection of his sin. Was this man come to accuse him of the crime which had been so long hidden from the world? Sinking into his chair he said in a muffled voice:

"You may proceed, sir."

CHAPTER XV.

THE SINS OF THE FATHER.

"TIME, my lord," commenced Mr. Molesworth, "is too valuable for me to lengthen unduly the story I have to relate. Such personal details as it is necessary to introduce shall be touched as lightly as possible, and I promise that no moralising shall tax your lordship's patience. It is a simple story, and in its initiatory phases not uncommon. Your lordship's knowledge of the world will enable you to vouch for this, but even that knowledge will not prepare you for the subsequent black-hearted treachery which has placed a hapless, and in my belief innocent, young being in peril of her life. There lived together two years ago a mother and her only child, a young lady scarcely seventeen years of age. The mother was a widow, and she and her daughter comprised the whole of her family. Their means were very straitened, and they occupied apartments in a middle-class house in the north of London. Their name is Leycester. May I assume that they are introduced to your lordship now for the first time?"

"I presume that you have a reason for your question," replied the Judge. "It is the first time I have heard of these persons."

"I shall ask no questions, my lord, and shall make no allusions, which do not bear directly upon my narrative. Mrs. Leycester's husband was an artist of considerable reputation, but unwise speculations plunged him into difficulties, and when he died, being at the

time but a comparatively young man, all the fortune he left his wife produced less than ten shillings a week. This miserable pittance was supplemented by the labour of the widowed lady, who was so skilful in the art of colouring photographs that she succeeded in earning an additional fifty pounds a year. Upon their small income she and her daughter lived the life of uncomplaining privation which falls to the lot of many who are fitted to move in, and to adorn, a higher station. I must ask your lordship to believe that Mrs. and Miss Leycester are ladies, in birth, education, manners, and feeling."

"Until your story is finished," said the Judge, "I accept without question the statements you make. At present I do not recognise the necessity of listening to it."

"You will recognise the necessity, my lord, before I have done. At the period of the commencement of my story a great misfortune befell Mrs. Leycester. Her eyesight failed her, and she was no longer able to pursue her avocation. The principal source of their income being thus cut off, it was imperative that something should be done to enable them to live. I must now introduce a gentleman to whom I shall give an assumed name, premising that, if it is your lordship's wish, his proper name shall be revealed before I retire. Mr. Heath—a name, indeed, borne by a connection of his—was a barrister of no particular repute, and not likely ever to make a noise in the world. He possessed an income sufficient to maintain a home in comfort, and to this circumstance may probably be ascribed his lack of practical ambition. Meeting Miss Leycester by chance, he fell in love with her, and, with honourable intention,

paid his addresses to her. They were not unfavourably received, and, although no absolute and definite engagement was entered into, he flattered himself that Miss Leycester returned his love. The young lady's nature is one of great simplicity, which depends much upon others, which is led by others, and therefore, when it meets with guile, is prone to be misled. It was the influence of her mother which prevented an engagement being ratified between her and Mr. Heath, but the elder lady's motives could not be impugned. She regarded Mr. Heath with distinct favour, but she confided to him privately her impression that her daughter was too young and too inexperienced to bind herself to him. She made no secret of their circumstances, and it is a proof of her honesty and honour that she should place a bar in the way of a marriage which would have raised her immediately from poverty, and rendered her future life easy and comfortable. 'My daughter has seen nothing of the world,' she said to Mr Heath, 'and very little of society. She has an affection for you which, narrow as her knowledge of life is, it may be imprudent and unfair to take advantage of. Wait a little. In a year or two she will be better able to judge whether she will be happy with you. I have had an experience in which a too early marriage led a dear young friend to a life of misery, and I would wish to spare my child this risk. My daughter has an opportunity of obtaining a situation as governess, in a family of position in the country. Let her accept this situation; let her live with this family, say, for two years. At the end of that time, if you are both of the same mind, I will freely and willingly give my consent to your union.' This was the sense of her counsel to Mr.

Heath, and, although he was deeply and sincerely in love, he could not but recognise its wisdom. After a tender parting between him and Miss Leycester, and an undertaking, to which her mother consented, that they should correspond with each other, the young lady left her home to enter upon her situation and probation. And now, my lord, this chapter being closed, I come to another of a darker nature. For six months Miss Leycester and Mr. Heath corresponded regularly, and in her letters to him there was nothing to lead him to suspect that his hopes of happiness were destined to be blighted. Almost suddenly she ceased to write to him. He wrote to enquire the reason, and he received from her a few words in reply, to the effect that there must be an end to their correspondence. Agonised by this unexpected blow he asked for an explanation, but none was forthcoming. He went to her mother, but she could give him no further satisfaction than that what she feared had probably occurred, and that her daughter had transferred her affections to another. There was, however, a mystery which he failed to pierce. It was evident to him that an incident had occurred which Miss Leycester was concealing from her mother. I will not dwell upon this phase of the matter, nor upon Mr. Heath's sufferings. It is sufficient to say that he was given to understand that the break between him and the lady he loved was final and irrevocable. He was compelled to accept it, and he went away, stricken with grief. After a lapse of eighteen months, in pursuance of a duty which devolved upon him, he made endeavours to ascertain the nature of the circumstances which had destroyed the hopes of his life, and it will preserve the sequence of the story

if I introduce here what subsequently came to his knowledge. It happened unfortunately that Miss Leycester made the acquaintance of a gentleman who presented himself to her in the name of Harcourt. How or by what means he gained an influence over her I cannot inform you; it is to Miss Leycester herself now inexplicable, and any tender feelings she may have had for him were long since completely dispelled. My impression is——"

The Judge interrupted him.

"It will be best, Mr. Molesworth, to say nothing of your impressions. Confine yourself to facts."

"I will do so, my lord, as far as possible; but this impression of which I am about to speak leads directly to a fact which will presently be mentioned, and which it is my firm conviction has a direct bearing upon the peril in which Miss Leycester stands. My impression, then, is that Mr. Harcourt compassed the poor young lady's ruin—for to that he brought her—by the foulest of means. Inexperienced and unprotected, blind to the danger which threatened her, deaf for a brief space—as too many mortals are at some period of their lives—to the whisperings of her heart and conscience, she fell a victim to the snare he laid for her. She concealed her shame from her mother's knowledge; she broke with the man who loved her honestly and truly; and she fled from the place where she was known, and sought refuge in a village of which she had never heard. There her baby was born, and there it was lost, and there she was arrested on the charge of murder. It happened that Mr. Heath was in the town in which she was to be tried. Seeing her, he recognised her, and undertook her defence."

He paused, and the Judge glanced at a memorandum which, among others, lay before him. It read: "In all probability being tried under an assumed name."

"Mr. Heath is yourself," he said.

"Yes, my lord."

"And the true name of the prisoner is Leycester."

"That is so."

"Have you finished?"

"By no means, my lord. Were this the extent of my knowledge and the end of the story, I should not have troubled your lordship. I have yet to justify my intrusion, and you have yet to learn who Mr. Harcourt is."

The Judge looked for a moment at the earnest man, and then lowered his eyes.

"Proceed, Mr. Molesworth."

"When I undertook Miss Leycester's defence I felt that there was a mystery which it was important, vitally important, should be unravelled. Happily I had with me a friend, my closest and best friend, by name Denver, and, as I could obtain no assistance whatever from the unfortunate lady, I enlisted him into her service and mine. Of his discoveries—do not interrupt me, my lord; they touch you too nearly—I will speak presently. I must first say something of what I learnt this afternoon in an interview with the unfortunate lady, during which I prevailed upon her to confide in me. It has been proved in court that after her child was born a man came to Mr. Tregartin's cottage during the woman's absence, and had some speech with Miss Leycester. This man was an emissary of Mr. Harcourt. They met in Brentingham Forest on several occasions, and, as we know now, a correspondence was carried on by means of the Two Sisters' tree, no mention being

made of the name of the person with whom she corresponded. I am in a position to prove that this man is Mr. Harcourt. Unless there is a miscarriage of justice he will be produced in court."

"Why should there be any miscarriage of justice, Mr. Molesworth?"

"With your permission, my lord, I will leave that question unanswered. I would fain elicit your lordship's opinion upon the necessity of this gentleman being produced and examined."

"Undoubtedly necessary, and probably, in the interests of the prisoner, advisable."

"His emissary also must be produced. We are now tracking these men down. I will now direct your lordship's attention to the particulars I gained from Miss Leycester in my interview this afternoon."

"A moment, Mr. Molesworth. Are you not violating your duty, are you not encroaching upon mine, and are you not also taking a monstrous advantage of your intrusion here, in venturing to speak of this to me out of court?"

"I am guilty of none of these derelictions, my lord. The last interview which took place between Miss Leycester and Mr. Harcourt's emissary in Brentingham Forest occurred on the day Mr. Tregartin took his family to London to spend a day of pleasure, on the day that the child disappeared. There had been previous endeavours made by Mr. Harcourt, through his emissary, to induce Miss Leycester to give up her child, but these endeavours failed, and it was known to Mr. Harcourt that it was her intention to register the child's birth in his name. Why, under the circumstances—as your lordship will admit when you learn the facts—

he should have been disturbed by this intention I cannot say, except that it opened up a probability of his real name being brought to light through the false name he had assumed. Miss Leycester had received a note instructing her to meet Mr. Harcourt's emissary in the forest on that day, and she was particularly enjoined to bring her child with her. We know that the weather was very bad on that day, and with rain and wind beating upon her the poor lady went with her child to the place of appointment. No one was there, and though she waited for some time there was no appearance of the man she expected to see. Pardon me for saying that I cannot conceive a more heartbreaking position than the one in which she was placed for a lady of refined and tender feeling. To keep herself in heart she began to sing some words of a song about brighter days to come, the tears running down her face the while, when suddenly, as she describes it, she fancied she heard a whispering voice behind her——"

"Can you not spare me this, Mr. Molesworth? It will find a more suitable place in your speech in court. The prisoner's mind was unbalanced. She was distraught."

"That is not my opinion, my lord. To me the circumstance points to a direct plot, clumsy it may be, and one that would certainly have failed if practised upon any but a sensitive, helpless lady, in a desperate position, but none the less a plot cunningly and villainously devised, and in which Mr. Harcourt had a hand."

The Judge made an impatient movement, as though he would have spoken; but some inward apprehension was more powerful than his impatience, and he refrained.

"The whispered words," continued Mr. Molesworth, "were: 'Better if baby were dead; then all your troubles would be over; you would be a free woman, and no one would know what has happened.' There are instances of hallucination, my lord, in which it is quite possible that a person might fancy such unspoken words uttered by human voice, or others to suit the particular position, generally a position of peril, in which he stands. But to make this delusion perfect it is absolutely necessary that the person who so imposes upon himself must have an inbred desire for the result. The wish must be father to the thought. Such a presumption is impossible in the case of Miss Leycester. She is a tender-hearted, delicate-minded lady. If there is one piece of evidence more strongly brought out than another by the witnesses who have been examined it is that she is by instinct and nature one of the kindest beings on earth, one who would not, even through carelessness, harm a defenceless living creature. Hence I argue that in this whispered voice in the forest, and in the words it spoke, there was no hallucination, there was no delusion. The words were uttered by human tongue, and she heard them. When Mr. Harcourt's emissary is produced in court I hope to drag the admission from his cowardly lips. Mark, my lord, what followed. Upon hearing the awful suggestion Miss Leycester turned her head, and the moment she did so she grew faint and dizzy. A vapour floated before her face, and she sank to the ground in a state of insensibility, and even then, in the brief space of time that elapsed before consciousness entirely deserted her, she heard the words repeated. My lord, she became unconscious in Brentingham Forest. When she awoke

she was on Rocky Reaches, and her baby was gone. To have traversed the distance between the forest and the sea she must have travelled with her eyes shut over two or three miles of most difficult road. She must have done so in the night—and such a night! Is it reasonable to suppose that she could have done this? No, my lord, she neither could do it nor did do it. She was carried there. The whispered voice, the sense of stifling vapour, the conveying of her from one spot to the other, all belonged to a cunning scheme which was successfully carried out—a cunning, devilish scheme to destroy an innocent life."

"Does it occur to you," said the Judge, "that you have wandered from your statement of facts, to which you promised to confine yourself, and have launched into arguments which have nothing to do with facts?"

"Only to a slight extent have I transgressed, my lord. In the argument I have used there is a distinct connection with a fact I shall bring to your notice. The wife, or paramour, of Mr. Harcourt's emissary is now in the hands of the agents employed by my friend Mr. Denver, and she is leading them to the man himself. She has testified that he carries about him a bottle of 'stuff,' as she calls it—chloroform, most likely—that takes people's senses away, and she is determined, she says, to find out what use he makes of it. He has tried it upon her, she declares, and sent her into a faint that rendered her insensible for a dozen hours. This statement makes presumptive proof positive, and goes far to establish my theory. And now, my lord, I approach a branch of this shocking affair which affects yourself. The necessity of the revelation

I have to make is forced upon me, and deeply do I regret it. You have admitted the advisability of producing Mr. Harcourt as a witness. We are after him —having only this day discovered his true name—but he may give us the slip. It is in your power to assist us in producing him. With your help he cannot escape us."

"You speak in enigmas, Mr. Molesworth," said the Judge and a stranger would have noticed that his voice was tremulous; and indeed it was, for a vague sense of impending evil was upon him. "You asserted that justice demanded that I should listen to what you had to say, and I have done so. I express no opinion as to whether you were warranted in making the statement. The story you have related is a sad one, but its truth, and the validity of your arguments, require to be substantiated by direct evidence. Justice will await that evidence before it speaks. That much will I say, and no more. But you have addressed me not only as a Judge, but as a father, and I do not disguise from you that this appeal had its weight with me. From another man I should have disregarded it, but the memory of my friendship with your father turned the balance in your favour. I understand that you have a revelation to make to me which will give me pain. Am I correct?"

"Unhappily, my lord, you are."

"This revelation is in some way connected with the Mr. Harcourt you have spoken of?"

"It is, my lord," said Mr. Molesworth sadly.

"And is connected also with me?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Make your revelation, Mr. Molesworth."

My lord, Mr. Harcourt is your son!"

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. JUSTICE RICHBELL EXAMINING THE TWO LETTERS.

A COLD perspiration bathed the Judge's forehead, and his face grew white. In pity for him Mr. Molesworth turned his head.

A silence of several minutes ensued, during which Mr. Molesworth stood immovable, with averted face. The Judge, looking before him, did not see the form of his visitor. In the space upon which he gazed appeared the dim outlines of two dread figures, those of a dead woman with a dead baby in her arms. Gradually they took distinct shape, and he saw them clearly. The woman's eyes opened and rested upon him, and he, now, heard words that were not spoken by human voice: "No man commits a wrong without, sooner or later, meeting with his punishment."

Yes, his punishment had come. It had waited all these years, to fall upon him with crushing weight. The sin of the father was to be punished through the son. Beyond the shapes of the dead woman and her child the spectral white figure of Justice stood in the air. Erect and calm she stood, the scales in her hands, and he, the Judge, was called upon to pronounce sentence.

The silence lasted so long that it became painful, and the consciousness of this forced itself upon him. He passed his hands across his eyes, and essayed to

speak, but his voice failed him; it was only after a supreme effort that he succeeded in controlling it.

"Mr. Molesworth?"

"My lord."

"Are you aware of the gravity of the accusation you have made?"

"I am painfully aware of it, my lord."

"You love the woman you are defending?"

"With all the strength of my soul, my lord, as deeply and tenderly now as I have ever done."

"A sentiment of this intense nature is apt to cloud one's intellect, to warp one's judgment."

"It does not warp mine, my lord. If my accusation is false it will recoil upon myself and upon the lady I am defending. What possible good can befall me in making this gentleman your son? The issue that is being tried would be fatally injured by it. I would, my lord, he were another man."

"In any case, sir, justice must be done."

His voice had gathered strength; he spoke in firmer accents.

"I expected no less, my lord."

"But I am bound to consider this matter from every point of view that presents itself."

"Undoubtedly, my lord, bearing in mind always the demand of justice."

"Do you think, sir, I need to be reminded of this?"

"Pardon me, my lord; I love the lady who is upon her trial for her life."

"It will be more manly, sir, to answer my question."

"I am certain, my lord, that you do not need to be reminded of it."

"There is the possibility of your being mistaken."

"There is a possibility, my lord, but I fear the proof will bear me out."

"Ah, the proof. I understand that the information reached you through your agents."

"Yes, my lord."

"How? By what means? In what shape?

"A telegram was received a few hours ago by my friend Mr. Denver, acquainting him with the discovery."

"A telegram!" said the Judge, with a deep sigh of relief. "Is that all?"

"No, my lord, it is not all."

"There is something more to disclose?"

"There is, my lord. I can place in your lordship's hands the means of verifying or falsifying the information."

"Explain yourself."

"It came out in evidence, my lord, that a correspondence was carried on between Miss Leycester and the gentleman she knows as Mr. Harcourt, and that the letters were placed in the Two Sisters' tree in Brentingham Forest. When this evidence was given in court I sent Mr. Tregartin immediately to the forest, upon the chance of his finding some letter or scrap of writing in the tree which by accident had been overlooked. The result of his search converted my supposition into a certainty. The torn fragments of such a letter were found beneath some stones in the cavity of the tree. He brought them to me, and they have been pieced together by my friend. The writing is exceedingly faint, but I have with me a strong magnifying-glass which will enable your lordship to decipher the words, and to ascertain whether the handwriting is that of your son."

"Give me the letter."

"It is in the possession of my friend who accompanied me here, and who is waiting for me in another room. Shall I bring him to your lordship?"

"No, I prefer not to see him. My business is with you, and you alone. Am I acquainted with your friend or he with me?"

"No, my lord. I do not suppose you ever heard of him till this moment. He knows your lordship, as all men do, through repute."

"Go to him, and bring me the letter. A moment. Has the prisoner any knowledge or suspicion that the Mr. Harcourt who"—he paused, choosing his words slowly—"who, if your story, or hers, is true, presented himself to her in that name, is my son?"

"I can answer almost with certainty, no, my lord. The information only reached me, through my friend, after my interview with her this afternoon."

"Go, if you please, and bring the letter to me."

Mr. Molesworth placed the magnifying-glass on the table, and left the room. While he was absent the Judge took from his pocket a letter addressed to him by his son, and gazed upon the writing. It was clear and firm, and there was small reason for his applying the magnifying-glass to the characters; but he did it, probably to test its power.

Mr. Molesworth returned, and placed before the Judge the letter which had been found by Mr. Tregartin. By this time the Judge had schooled himself to absolute calmness, and there was not a tremor in his hands and face as he examined the torn fragments which, in their mute testimony, were to damn or clear his name. His examination lasted a considerable time,

and he made a careful and exhaustive comparison of the faded writing with the fresher writing of the letter he had taken from his pocket.

He touched the bell.

"You will require this mutilated letter, Mr. Molesworth?"

"Yes, my lord."

The Judge rose.

"Mr. Molesworth, my son will appear in court. Good-night."

"Good-night, my lord."

As he left the room the herculean Sandy entered it. While the Judge was giving certain instructions to his servant, Mr. Tregartin was driving Mr. Molesworth and Mr. Denver back to the Waverley Arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MAN MAXWELL.

Mr. Norman Richbell, son of the Judge, gentleman born, and scamp by nature, was playing billiards in a fashionable hotel some sixty miles distant from the town in which the trial was taking place. He had for company some choice spirits of a lower grade by birth, but superior to him in all other respects, notwithstanding the fact that there were two or three blacklegs among them. By force of comparison there may be much virtue in a blackleg, who, in certain company, may hold high rank. How it came to pass that there was lacking in Mr. Norman Richbell those moral qualities which entitle the possessor to the respect of men and women in whom conscience is not an unknown quantity, is too abstruse a question to be here discussed at any length. There are inherited taints of the blood which, when the doctrine of responsibility for human action is justly determined, may entitle the inheritor to practical pity; but even then no pity will be extended to the coward who, for his own selfish ends and personal safety refrains from stretching forth his hand to save an innocent being whom he has deliberately doomed to destruction. This was the unpardonable crime which Mr. Norman Richbell was perpetrating.

He was by no means easy in his mind. Accomplished billiard-player as he was, his hands trembled as he struck the balls. He was playing for money, and the

blacklegs were pocketing his gold. This made him savage, and he cursed the balls, the marker, the men who were winning, and the world in general. Guilty persons frequently seek to minimise their sins by making a sacrificial scapegoat of the world.

"Curse the luck!" he exclaimed, as he made a stroke which lost him the game.

"Hard lines, sir," said his opponent. "Set them up again, marker."

They were playing pyramids, a pound a ball, with bets made all round, and the biter was being bit. The worst, or the best, of it was, that he had but a few sovereigns left in his purse. He had drawn heavily upon his father lately, and had been warned that there would be no further advances for some time to come. Mr. Justice Richbell had no idea that his son was a confirmed gambler as well as a heartless *roué*. The hypocrite was a past-master in the art of deceit, and until now had been successful in masking his true character. It was important that he should win the game which was just commenced. He had looked anxiously in the evening papers for a report of the trial, but no mention was made of it. Tortured by suspense and fear, he had resolved to run across to Paris for a few days. He did not believe that he was in any danger, for he had been most careful in concealing his real name and position from the poor girl he had betrayed. The plan he had conceived to save himself from possible exposure had miscarried, it is true, but that was not his fault; it was the fault of the miscreant he had employed, who had chosen to misconstrue his instructions and to conduct them to a tragic end. Was he to blame for this miscarriage? No; it was a

piece of bad luck for which he was not responsible. It was not to be supposed that he would come forward and ruin all his prospects in life because his instructions had not been properly carried out. A mistake had been made. Well, he would not bear the brunt of it. If somebody was to suffer, it should not be he. After all, she had only herself to thank for it. She should not have been so obstinate. She should have given up the child as he wished, as he commanded her to do. She had disobeyed him, and she must take the consequences. Think of the suffering she was inflicting upon him—this torture of suspense and fear was her doing! If he felt remorse, was she not the cause of it?

It is by such-like false and cruel casuistry that sinners seek to justify themselves.

A trip to Paris, with pleasure in view, costs money. Mr. Norman Richbell had calculated for a hundred pounds. That might even allow for a run to Monte Carlo, and a plunge at *trente et quarante*. Once he was there he would be sure to win a hundred or two; perhaps more. There was the chance of breaking the bank. It had been done by other men; why not by him? What a monstrous thing it was—what an oppression, that ever and again, in the midst of these glowing reflections, there should intrude the white face of a young girl who had brought misfortune upon him! He strove to brush it away; he laughed aloud, and struck the air violently; but this white face, with its wild, imploring eyes and disordered hair, would not be denied. Again and again it presented itself—for what? To make his life intolerable, to inflict misery upon him. Was ever man so persecuted?

He began to play pyramids with fifty pounds in his

pocket. The trip to Paris would cost a hundred. He was really a very fine player; some of his winning hazards were marvels of dexterity; he had beaten professionals. An easy task to make his fifty pounds a hundred. The balls were to be paid for on the nail, a sovereign for every winning hazard; his opponent was a bungler; that was easily to be seen by the way he handled his cue. The man had plenty of money, too; while the balls were being stacked, he pulled out a pocket-book stuffed with bank-notes. He would not be content with making his fifty pounds a hundred; he would make it two; he would stump the fool who fancied he could play pyramids.

But fate had ranged itself against him. No, it was not fate; it was the girl with the white face and wild eyes. There she was, hovering over the pocket, and driving his own white ball in instead of the red. Curse her! Why did she appear at the very moment he was making his stroke? That was the revenge she was taking upon him. Pity her! What was she doing to him that she should deserve pity?

He would get rid of her somehow. He called for brandy, and drank a glass, neat. It nerved him; it put courage into him. He made a long and difficult winning hazard.

"Good stroke!" cried his opponent.

"I'll show you!" he cried triumphantly, pocketing the sovereign. "This goes into the middle pocket, off three cushions."

"Two sovs to one against it," offered a blackleg.

"Done with you," said Mr. Norman Richbell, and failed by half-a-dozen inches.

That was the way the games continued to go, always

against him, till he had come to his last ten pounds. In the game he was now playing the scoring had been equal, ball for ball, "Seven all," being called by the marker.

"Ten pounds on the last ball," he cried.

"That's a bet," said his opponent, who essayed what he believed would be the winning stroke, but he missed by a hair's breadth; the ball hung over a top pocket; a novice could have won the game now.

The room in which they were playing was a public room, free to all comers, and when the game was half over some strangers had entered and taken their seats. Mr. Norman Richbell did not notice them; he was absorbed in his game; but to three of the strangers he was, unknown to himself, an object of interest. The strangers appeared to be engaged upon a silent game of their own; two were covertly watching the third, who strove to conceal his perturbation, but that he had some cause for fear would have been evident to persons whose attention was drawn to them. The other onlookers, however, were intent upon the game of billiards.

With a smile of satisfaction Mr. Norman Richbell proceeded to pocket the last ball. It would be ten pounds saved from the fire. He would offer to double the stakes the next game. His trip to Paris would come off, after all.

He drew back his cue, and, in the act of striking, a cough from a spectator disturbed him. He looked up, annoyed, and his eyes met those of the third of the strangers. With a gesture of anger he struck the ball, which went plump into the pocket; but his own followed it. He had lost the game. Muttering an oath, he threw his ten pounds down and quitted the

room. The third stranger immediately followed him, and the other two quietly followed the third.

Mr. Norman Richbell ran up the stairs; the third man ran after him; the remaining two paused at the foot of the stairs. One said to the other in an undertone:

"He will have to come down to get out of the house."

His companion nodded, and they both waited quietly for the man they had hunted down. A waiter passed them, and pulled himself up when he was accosted.

"Who is that gentleman who has just gone upstairs?"

"That?" answered the waiter, accepting the shilling that was offered him. "Oh, that is Mr. Richbell, the son of the Judge, you know."

They smiled at each other, but said nothing.

Mr. Norman Richbell, entering his bedroom, left the door partly open; the third stranger pushed his way in swiftly, and, closing the door, clapped his back to it.

"Curse you!" cried Mr. Norman Richbell. "What brings you here?"

"Fair words, guv'nor, if you please," said the stranger. "Would you mind my locking the door first?"

"What for?" demanded Mr. Norman Richbell.

"If I ain't mistaken," was the reply, "I am being followed."

"That's no business of mine."

"It may be, guv'nor." He turned the key, and advanced a step or two into the room.

He was a common-looking man, commonly dressed; one of his shoulders was higher than the other, and he

was continually hitching it up—a fatal sign when one is under a cloud and wishes to keep himself from observation. His name was Maxwell.

"Look here, guv'nor," he said, "this wouldn't have happened if you'd acted square by me."

"I neither know nor care to know," retorted Mr. Norman Richbell, "what you mean by 'this wouldn't have happened,' but I'll make it warm for you if you follow me about like this."

"Will you?" said Maxwell. "How about yourself?" The gentleman's face twitched convulsively. "There's two of us, remember. I don't want to rile you, but I advise you to be civil."

"Cut it short," said Mr. Norman Richbell. "What is it you want?"

"Money."

"I've given you what I promised; you'll get no more."

"Oh yes, I will, guv'nor. As to giving me what you promised, that's not so. You held out hopes, and you'll satisfy me, or I'll know the reason why. The trial ain't over yet. If I'm nabbed, you'll find yourself in the same boat with me."

"Curse you!" cried Mr. Norman Richbell. "If you threaten me, I'll have your life!"

"Be careful, guv'nor; it's a game that two can play at."

There was little doubt which of the two would be the victor in physical contest. Maxwell was a square-set man, barring his odd shoulders, and his frame indicated great strength. Mr. Norman Richbell was a straw of a man, and he was, moreover, manifestly out of condition. He gave one look at Maxwell, who was standing

before him in an attitude of defiance, and turned away beating the table with his hand.

"If you had done what I told you to do," he said in a milder tone, "there would have been no trouble."

"I did as I was ordered to do."

"You did not."

"I did, guv'nor. If I'm put to it I'll swear a Bible oath to it."

"Yes, yes. You're ready to swear away a gentleman's life to make yourself safe."

"That's what I want to do—not to swear anybody's life away, but to make myself safe. Let's speak a little lower, guv'nor. If you don't mind I'll just have a peep outside." He peeped through the keyhole, unlocked the door carefully, so that the key should make no noise in the lock, then opened it slowly, and looked up and down the passage. No one was in view. "Perhaps I was mistaken," he said, confronting his employer. "Anyways, I'm going to make myself scarce. But I'll have this out with you first, guv'nor, if you don't mind. I ain't going to have a thing hanging over me that I ain't accountable for."

"That you're not accountable for, you scoundrel!" said Mr. Norman Richbell, in a tone of suppressed passion, "when you've committed murder!"

"It's an ugly word; I'm free to admit that. But such was your order."

"It was not my order. I told you to get the child away from her."

"No, no, guv'nor. You told me to get rid of the child. Well, I got rid of it. And now you turn upon me. I do your dirty work for you, and you'd leave me in the hole. Flesh and blood won't stand that, you

know. Have you got a drop of brandy about? I've been scared out of my life."

"You will find a flask in the pocket there." He pointed to a coat that was hanging up; above it was suspended a light travelling cap. Maxwell gave a start.

"It looks for all the world like a man strung up, guv'nor," he said. He took a flask from the pocket, unscrewed it, and applied it to his lips. He did not set it down till he had drained the last drop. "That puts life into a man. Guv'nor, for your sake and mine, I'm going to cross the Channel."

"Cross it, and be hanged to you!"

"Be hanged to me," repeated Maxwell, with an ugly laugh. "I hope it won't come to that for either of us. Can't cross the Channel, guv'nor, without money."

"I've none to give you. I'm stumped. They've cleaned me out in the billiard-room."

"That's bad, and I can believe as much of it as I please. There, don't fire up again, guv'nor. If you won't give me money I'll take what's as good. I ain't particular. You've got a diamond ring on your finger; you've got a gold watch in your pocket. I'll put up with them till you raise the wind."

"And if I refuse to give them to you?"

"As I'm a living man I'll peach. I will; and it'll be you that drives me to it. Take your choice. I'm sick of this palavering. If I cross the Channel, you're safe; if I stop, it's all up with you. Now you can do what you like."

Mr. Norman Richbell considered a moment, and appeared to make up his mind to a certain course.

"Just attend to me, you scoundrel!"

"I won't be talked to in that way. Scoundrel your-

self! If you hadn't said you would make it worth my while, do you think I'd ever have done the job? What have I gained by it? All I've managed to screw out of you is a paltry thirty pounds. Do you call that making it worth my while? You're a liberal gent, you are, and no mistake!"

"Attend to me, I say."

"As you leave out the scoundrel, I don't mind. Out with it, guv'nor. What do you propose?"

"I will submit to be robbed——"

"Easy does it," interrupted Maxwell. "You're up to your games again. Rob you, guv'nor! It ain't in me to do anything so low. I'm here to get what's due to me, and I advise you not to talk of robbing. You ain't the only one that's got feelings."

"I will give you the ring——"

"And the watch, guv'nor—and the watch and chain. I've set my heart on it."

"You shall not have both."

"I will have both, guv'nor, or I'll blow the gaff. I'll go straight to the police-station, and say: "There's an innocent young gal being tried for murder. She didn't do it. Mr. Norman Richbell, son of the judge that's trying the case'—what a game it is when you come to think of it!—'Mr. Norman Richbell is the one that ought to be in the dock, and I'm ready to give evidence against him. Come along o' me; I'll take you to him.' Word for word, that's what I'll say to the inspector if you don't give me what I ask for."

"You'll have to prove I was on the spot."

"I'll prove it, guv'nor. Leave it to me to prove. Don't forget that you were keeping out of sight till the job was done—waiting for me to come and report."

"And about yourself?"

"Oh, I'll prove an *alibi*. I've provided for it, guv'nor. You ain't in it with me. I can give you points, and beat you out of sight. How do you think I've lived all these years?"

Maxwell was growing more insolent every moment. He saw the fear Mr. Norman Richbell was in, and, like an astute knave, was taking advantage of it.

"You've been setting a trap for me," said the gentleman.

"Not a bit of it, guv'nor," said the lower-class villain. "Me set a trap! And for a pal too! I ain't one of that kidney; but what a man's got to do in this here world is to take care of number one. That's all I've done; and such a gent as you are, brought up as you've been, and the son of a Judge, can't blame me for it. Tell me, now," he said, with insinuating insolence, "can you blame a poor cove for taking care of number one?"

Mr. Norman Richbell took the ring from his finger and the gold watch and chain from his pocket, and kept them in his hand.

"You will cross the Channel?"

"I will, guv'nor. Send I may die if I don't! And you shall never set eyes on me again. I'll take a French ship to America, and when I'm there I'll lead a honest, respectable life. Why, you might be a gospel man when you consider the good you're going to do me!"

"What will you do with these?" asked Mr. Norman Richbell, looking at the ring and watch. "Sell them?"

"Would I do anything so mean? No, guv'nor; I'll

pop 'em the first thing in the morning, and I'll send you the tickets. Could a cove speak fairer? I always act square with a pal, I do."

"Take them, and never let me see your face again."

"I give you my word of honour on it, guv'nor."

He opened the door, peered cautiously up and down the passage, as he had done before, ducked his head at Mr. Norman Richbell, and was off.

Left to himself, the young gentleman walked up and down the room, with shaking nerves and trembling limbs. Until this night he had not clearly faced the deed of which he was the instigator, but now Maxwell's plain speech had brought home to him the peril in which he stood. He recognised that he was in this man's power, and that his only hope of safety lay in Maxwell's disappearance from the country for ever. Could he trust the scoundrel? could he depend upon his word? He must; there was no alternative. He had no feeling of compassion for the young girl he had sacrificed. It was only of himself he thought. He grew faint and sick with fear. He started at a shadow; a paper fluttering to the ground drove the blood from his heart; the room was filled with accusing sounds. And in a house sixty miles away his father was also pacing his room, face to face with his early sin. But in one marked respect these two men were far apart—in the quality of moral courage. The son shook with fear and dread; the awful possibilities of to-morrow appalled him. The father, with pale face and sad eyes, looked forward to the future with stern resolve and composure. The bolt had fallen; he would meet it like a man.

A new cause for apprehension suddenly occurred to Mr. Norman Richbell. The watch he had given Max-

well bore his name, engraved upon the inner surface of the case. Fool, madman, that he was! He had placed himself still further in the man's power. But he could not recall the act. The man was gone. To deaden the sickening fear that stole upon him he rang the bell for brandy, and, drinking it, undressed himself, and strove to seek relief in sleep.

Meanwhile Maxwell strode through the streets, laughing to himself. He had played a blustering game, and had won. He had had no intention of carrying his threats into execution—he was too careful of his own safety—but they had served his turn. The property he had wrested from his cowardly employer must be worth not less than fifty pounds; he was a good judge of the value of such articles. He was really in earnest in his declaration that he would leave England. He had long wished to go to the States, and the means of doing so were now in his possession. He had another source of satisfaction; he had seen nothing of the men he fancied had been watching him. Upon leaving the hotel he looked carefully about him, and had come to the conclusion that he had deceived himself. But in this conclusion he reckoned without his host. The men he feared were tracking him stealthily now, awaiting their opportunity. Maxwell afforded it to them. Reaching a quiet street, where he believed himself to be alone, he stopped by the side of a lamp-post and examined his treasures. The diamond sparkled in the light; he held it up and admired it, and as he did so a hand was laid upon his shoulder. Turning, he saw the two men who had followed him into the billiard-room. In the twinkling of an eye, before he had time to resist, a pair of handcuffs was round his wrists.

"Nabbed!" said one of the men.

"What for?" cried Maxwell.

"You'll know soon enough," was the answer. They had taken the watch and ring from him, and were examining them. "For one thing, my lad, stolen property."

"You're out of your reckoning there," said Maxwell, to whom this kind of adventure was not quite new. "They were given to me."

"A likely story. Look here, Jack, 'Norman Richbell' engraved on the case."

"He presented me with the watch and the ring," said Maxwell, in a dare-devil tone. "Mr. Norman Richbell is a particular friend of mine. I'll take you to him if you like."

"We know where to lay hands on him. Don't we, Jack?"

"Rather!"

"Look here," said Maxwell, "you'll get yourselves in trouble for this job."

"We'll risk it, my man. Won't we, Jack?"

"It's what we propose to do."

"You won't take me to Mr. Richbell?"

"We won't. Will we, Jack?"

"Not if Mr. Maxwell went down on his bended knees."

"Oh, you know my name?"

"Slightly. It's not the only thing we know about you. Is it, Jack?"

"Not by a long way."

"By the Lord!" cried Maxwell, inspired by a sudden thought, "did he send you after me?"

"Ah, that's the question. Isn't it, Jack?"

"That's about it."

"If he has," exclaimed Maxwell, "I'll make it warm for him. Here, I say, where's your warrant?"

Captor number one pulled out a staff.

"Are you coming quietly?"

"What if I don't?"

"We'll just give you a little tap on the head. Won't we, Jack?"

"Them's my sentiments."

"All right," said Maxwell, resigning himself to his fate. "But I'll make you pay for it, mind." Another thought occurred to him. "Can we square it?"

"Can we square it? What should you say, Jack?"

"I should say he's an infernal fool."

"You're another," said Maxwell defiantly, and walked away quietly with his captors.

At five o'clock the next morning Mr. Norman Richbell was awakened by some person shaking him roughly in his bed. He started up. The window blind was drawn aside, and there was just light enough for him to see who the intruder was.

"What, Sandy!" he cried.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Justice Richbell's confidential man. "I'll trouble you to get up at once and dress yourself."

"What for, Sandy?" asked Mr. Norman Richbell, jumping out of bed. "Has anything happened?"

"I'm not at liberty to enter into conversation, sir. Here are your trousers, sir."

"But you must explain——"

"Begging your pardon, sir, I can explain nothing. I'm acting on his lordship's orders. You are to come with me without a moment's delay. His lordship wishes to see you."

"It is not convenient for me to go with you so suddenly."

"You must make it convenient, sir. My orders are to take you to his lordship."

"But surely I have a voice in it, Sandy?"

"No, sir, I don't think you have."

"You are impertinent," said Mr. Norman Richbell, throwing himself into a chair. "Flatly, I decline to come."

"Flatly, sir," said Sandy, firmly and respectfully, "if you won't come willingly, I shall have to take you unwillingly."

"By force?" cried the young man.

"By force, sir. I can do it. His lordship's orders must be obeyed."

Mr. Norman Richbell glanced at Sandy, and saw that the man was thoroughly in earnest. In silence he proceeded to dress himself.

"There's a bill to pay here, Sandy, and I have no money."

"I have seen to that, sir. The account is settled."

"Where is my father stopping, Sandy?"

"At a house called Fairview, sir."

"And you are to take me there, whether I will or no?"

"I am to take you there, sir, whether you are willing or not."

Mr. Norman Richbell shrugged his shoulders in the endeavour to show that he was not ill at ease. But it was not until he and Sandy were in the train that he was chilled by the thought that he was going to the town in which the young girl he had betrayed was being tried for her life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE THIRD DAY OF THE TRIAL.

THE counsel for the prosecution: "My lord, before my learned brother resumes his defence I have, with his concurrence, to speak of a circumstance which has come to our knowledge, and which will render it necessary that some amendment be made in the indictment. It is that the prisoner is being tried under an assumed name."

The Judge: "Are you in a position to prove this, and to prove also the proper name she bears?"

Counsel for the prosecution: "I am, my lord. A lady, who last evening read a report of the proceedings of this court in a London evening paper, is now present, having travelled from London in the night. I propose to call her."

The Judge: "You may call your witness."

"Call Mrs. Geraldine Leycester."

Counsel for the defence (in an undertone to the prisoner): "Be brave. There is nothing to fear."

Mrs. Leycester, a lady of middle age, whose features bore traces of deep suffering, entered the box, and was sworn.

"Your name is Geraldine Leycester?"

"Yes."

"You reside in the north of London?"

"Yes."

"You are a widow?"

"I am."

"Do you know the prisoner?"

"Yes."

"What is her name?"

"Margaret Leycester."

"Is she your daughter?"

"She is."

"Her name is not Mary Lee?"

"It is not."

Counsel for the defence: "I have nothing to ask you."

The witness left the box.

Counsel for the defence: "My lord, I have an application to make which I trust your lordship will accede to. The accused is in a state of nervous prostration, which is likely to be intensified by the proceedings of to-day. If her mother, who she knew, through me, was in court, but with whom she has exchanged no word, is permitted to sit near her, it will strengthen her to endure what she has to go through."

The Judge: "In the peculiar circumstances of this case there can be no objection to your suggestion. The officers will see to it."

Mrs. Leycester was conducted to a seat which the counsel for the defence had already provided for her, so close to the prisoner that they could clasp hands. The tears streamed down the mother's face as she took the seat and bent forward.

"My child!" she whispered.

"Mother, mother!"

"Turn to me, dear child!"

No attempt was made to prevent the embrace which followed these tender utterances. Many persons in court, men as well as women, witnessed the solemn scene with tears in their eyes. Mrs. Leycester resumed her seat, which had been pushed still closer to the prisoner, and took her daughter's hand in hers.

Counsel for the defence: "My lord, I have another application to make. Certain witnesses have been brought from a distance upon whose evidence I rely. They are not here of their own prompting, but have been brought to this place. In order that they shall not hear each other's evidence they are now outside the court. Their presence in the witness-box, when they are called upon to appear, is in some sense vital to my case, and I have a fear that one or more of them may attempt to evade their responsibility. I ask that they be properly guarded, and that none of them shall, by reason of lax watching, have any opportunity afforded them to escape. It is an unusual application, I am aware, but it is not the only unusual feature in this painful case, and nothing but my great anxiety would induce me to make it."

The Judge: "If what you require has not already been done, it shall be seen to at once."

Counsel for the defence: "I thank you, my lord. Call Mr. Norman Richbell."

A thrill ran round the court. Mr. Norman Richbell! Why, that was the name of the Judge's son! What evidence could he have to give in the case? And to appear before his father, too, who was judging it! The spectators looked at each other in wonder, and then turned their eyes upon the Judge. His face was calm and impassive, and showed no sign that anything of an

extraordinary nature was taking place. A noble face, massive and grand in its proportions, the thoughtful eyes and lined forehead denoting the care and attention he was bestowing upon the duty in which he was engaged. Justice had indeed in him a worthy representative.

Counsel for the defence (speaking in a low tone to Mrs. Leycester): "When this witness begins to speak control your daughter's agitation. You will soon understand why I give you and her this caution."

Mr. Norman Richbell made his appearance in court, accompanied by Sandy. He was carefully dressed, and, as if in defiance, had placed a flower in his coat. Being directed to go into the witness-box, he hesitated, and looked at his father. But from Mr. Justice Richbell came no sign of recognition, nor did he evince any emotion. He seemed to be dividing his attention between the witness and the prisoner, his eyes travelling from one to the other with thoughtful and apparently unimpassioned observance. The direction to Mr. Norman Richbell to take his place in the witness-box was repeated, and this time he obeyed it.

"The evidence you shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God."

It had been his intention to make only a pretence of kissing the Holy Book, but the keen eyes of the counsel for the defence were upon him, and he became aware, also, that he was being watched with curiosity by nearly every person in court. He put his lips to the Book, and laid it down.

"Your name is Norman Richbell?"

"It is. I am the Judge's son."

A cry issued from the lips of the prisoner, who, when the witness answered the first question started to her feet, and stared wildly in his direction.

"Hush!" whispered the counsel for the defence. "Be calm. You are safe. I, who would lay down my life for you, tell you that you have now nothing to fear."

The prisoner, breaking into a passion of weeping, sank into the chair in which she had been allowed to sit, and was drawn into her mother's arms. The incident produced great excitement in court, and "Silence" was demanded several times before it was obtained.

The Judge (to counsel for the defence): "If you think it advisable, the court will adjourn for a quarter of an hour, during which the prisoner can be attended to."

Counsel for the defence (after exchanging a few words with the prisoner and her mother): "There is no need for an adjournment, my lord. The accused is recovering."

In making the unsolicited declaration that he was the Judge's son, Mr. Norman Richbell had acted with deliberate intention. Two hours before the opening of the court he had been taken to the house in which the Judge resided during the session, but his father had refused to see him. Thereupon he said that as his presence did not seem to be required he would leave the place, but this he was not allowed to do. Sandy stopped the way again, and the man made it clear to him that if he did not go quietly to the court he would be taken there by force. He was well acquainted with Sandy's doggedness and faithfulness, and though he attempted to evade his captor he did not succeed.

Before he left the house he was served with an order to appear as a witness in the trial, and from that moment he was completely powerless. Despite that he was the son of an eminent Judge and lawyer, he knew little of the law, and he imagined that his open statement of the relationship between them would in some way aid him; but in this he was mistaken, as was shown by the remark made by the Judge when the excitement into which the court had been thrown by the prisoner's wild cry had calmed down.

The Judge: "It is necessary that the witness should be warned to answer simply the questions that are put to him."

Counsel for the defence: "Quite so, my lord." (To witness:) "Are you acquainted with the accused?"

No answer. Question repeated.

"I am."

"And she with you?"

"Yes."

"Where did your acquaintance commence?"

"In Ilford."

"How did it commence?"

"In the usual way."

"Explain what you mean by 'in the usual way'?"

"No explanation is required; it explains itself."

"Not to me nor the court. Were you introduced to each other by a mutual friend?"

"No."

"Did you introduce yourself to her?"

"I think so."

"It is a matter which does not admit of a doubt in your mind. Did you introduce yourself to her?"

"Yes."

"In your own name?"

Witness did not reply.

The Judge: "Answer the question."

Witness: "No, not in my own name."

"In an assumed name, then?"

"Yes."

"What was the name you assumed?"

"Harcourt."

"The accused knew you as Mr. Harcourt?"

"Yes."

"What reason had you for concealing your true name?"

"I did not conceal it."

"But you did not disclose it to her. Is not that an evidence of concealment?"

"You must think what you please."

"Very well. An intimacy grew up between you?"

"Yes."

"Had you promised her marriage?"

"It was not exactly a promise."

"What was it then?" No answer. "She had an expectation that you would marry her?"

"If she chose to believe it, that was her affair."

"The court may think otherwise. Did she call upon you, when she informed you of her condition, to fulfil your promise?"

"She asked me to marry her, to save her good name."

"You refused?"

"Yes, I refused. I said it was impossible."

"Did you see her again, after that refusal?"

"I did not."

"Did you know what became of her?"

"All I know is that she disappeared. She ran away."

"She left Ilford?"

"So I understood."

"Did you make any efforts to discover where she had gone?"

"I made enquiries."

"Where? How? Of whom?"

"I do not recollect. All I can say is, I made enquiries."

"What was the result of those enquiries?"

"There was no result."

"You learned nothing of her movements?"

"I learned nothing."

"At the time?"

"Yes, at the time."

"But you heard from her subsequently?"

"She wrote to me from Brentingham."

"That is, from the adjacent village?"

"I take it from you that it is the adjacent village. I am not familiar with this neighbourhood."

"What did she say to you in the letter referred to?"

"Oh, the usual thing."

"The answer will not do. She informed you that she had sought refuge in a village where she was not known?"

"I think she said something to that effect."

"Have you that letter?"

"No, I do not keep letters of that kind."

"Did she inform you that, to hide her—her shame, she had assumed the name of Mary Lee?"

"I suppose she must have informed me."

"There is no supposing. You replied to that letter?"

"Yes, I replied to it."

"You wrote some name upon your envelope. What name?" No answer. "I must press you upon this point. In what name did you address her?"

"Mary Lee."

"As we are speaking now of her first letter and your reply to it, I may take it that she did inform you that she had adopted the name of Mary Lee?"

"It must have been so. I could not have invented the name."

"Exactly. Did she tell you in that first letter that she was in great distress?"

"She said she was in need of some assistance."

"In the shape of money?"

"Yes, in the shape of money."

"Did you send her any?"

"No, I had none to spare."

"Did she write to you again?"

"Yes."

"And again?"

"Yes."

"Always to the same effect?"

"Pretty much to the same effect."

"And still you sent her no money?"

"I could not."

"Did you promise to send her any?"

"I said I would when I could spare it."

"She wrote to you before her child was born?"

"I have told you so already."

"And after her child was born?"

"Yes."

"In any of those letters did she remind you of your promise of marriage, and urge you to fulfil it?"

"No. She seemed to have made up her mind not to have anything more to do with me."

"Have you not one of those letters?"

"Not one. I burnt them all."

"From the day upon which you last saw her to the present time she has not received a shilling from you?"

"No."

"Before I proceed to another branch of the subject, I wish to ask you if you were playing billiards last night?"

"What has that to do with the affair?"

"Answer my question."

"Well, yes, I was playing billiards. Do you object to it?"

"The game was pyramids, I believe?"

"Yes, it was."

"You were betting on the balls?"

"Of course I was."

"And you lost?"

"Yes, I lost."

"How much?"

"I refuse to answer."

"You must answer. You have stated that the reason why you did not assist the accused in her distress was that you had no money to spare. I wish to verify your statement. How much did you lose?"

"Fifty pounds."

"Do you persist in saying that you were unable to comply with her reasonable request?" No answer.

"Are you acquainted with a man named Maxwell?"

"I appeal to the court."

"What for?"

"Must I answer all these questions?"

The Judge: "You have no choice. The learned counsel is treating you as a hostile witness. You will answer them."

"Are you acquainted with a man named Maxwell?"

"I know a man of that name."

"I warn you not to equivocate. The consequences may be serious. What occupation does that man follow?"

"He is a travelling conjurer."

"A mountebank?"

"Something like that."

"Is he a man of good character?"

"I know nothing of his character."

"Does he tell fortunes?"

"He pretends to."

"Are you aware that he is skilled in the use of chloroform, and in the pursuit of his designs sometimes administers it?"

"I cannot say what he is skilled in. You had best put those questions to him if you can find him."

"Very well. You are acquainted with the man; but he does not belong to your station in life?"

"Not at all."

"You employed him to do you some service?"

"I paid him for what he did for me."

"I am not disputing that. It is a fact that you employed him?"

"Yes, it is. If you like, and as you are so hard upon me, I will tell you all about it."

"I wish to elicit the truth. You are aware that the accused is being tried on the charge of killing her child?"

"Yes, I am aware of it."

"No more serious charge could be brought against any person, and all in this court are desirous that justice should be done. It is to this end that I am pressing you hard, as you term it. We shall be glad to hear what you have to say respecting your transactions with the man Maxwell."

"There were no transactions. You use wrong words, to my injury. I employed him as a go-between, that is all."

"As a go-between? You mean between you and the accused?"

"Yes. Naturally I did not wish to appear in the affair myself, everything being at an end between me and the prisoner, and I am not accountable for what has occurred. Every man makes mistakes in life, and I am no better than the rest, I suppose. The prisoner, after the child was born, worried me out of my life with her letters, and I sent Maxwell to her to arrange matters."

The witness, who had spoken very rapidly, paused here.

"To arrange matters? Go on."

"I thought it would be best for her that the child should be put somewhere away from her, where she would not have the trouble, and, if you like, the shame of it. What I did was out of consideration for her. I sent Maxwell with a proposition that she should give up the child, and said I would take care of it. A man could scarcely do more than that. It was a fair proposition. Then she would be free from reproach and shame. I am not using my own words, but yours and hers. She would not consent. If it hadn't been for her obstinacy——"

"Why do you pause? Proceed. If it had not been for her obstinacy——"

"I shall not say what I was about to say; you can't force me; and perhaps I had no right to say so much."

"You had no right to say so much. The accused would not listen to the proposal you made to her through the man Maxwell?"

"No, she would not listen to it."

"Your wish was that she should give up the child entirely, and never see it again?"

"Yes, it would have been altogether the best thing for her, and for the child, too."

"And she steadfastly refused to listen to you?"

"Yes, she did."

"Do you remember the 25th of April?"

"Not particularly."

"I will assist you. It was on that day that the man Maxwell was to meet the accused in Brentingham Forest—where they had met several times before on your business—and endeavour, for the last time, to induce her to consent to your proposal?"

"As you fix it in that way I suppose I must remember it, though the date is not in my mind."

"No? And yet it was upon that day that the child was supposed to be drowned?"

"As you insist upon having it, I will say that I remember it."

"Was the specific purpose of this meeting on that date to make a last appeal to her?"

"Yes, to bring her to reason."

"Well?"

"Well? I don't know what you mean."

"Maxwell went upon your errand?"

"He did."

"And returned to you?"

"Yes."

"What report did he make to you?"

"That was the end of the affair."

"That was all?"

"That was all."

"Did you not enquire for particulars?"

"I did not. I had been very anxious about the whole affair, and I was glad to hear it was at an end."

"Now, shortly afterwards did you not see in the papers that the accused had been arrested on the charge of drowning her child?"

"I saw something about it."

"Upon reading that, what steps did you take?"

"No steps."

"None whatever?"

"None whatever."

"You knew that the accused was in prison upon this dreadful charge, and yet you did nothing to assist her?"

"What could I have done? If I had gone to her it would not have helped her in any way."

"Did you believe the charge to be true?"

"I did not know what to believe."

"You must have had some ideas on the subject?"

"I thought it likely she might have done it in a fit of insanity, and I was very sorry for her."

"You knew that she was penniless. Did it not occur to you that it was your duty to engage counsel to defend her?"

"I was in a dreadful position—and all through her unreasonableness. I could not drag myself into it; it

would have done no good. Besides, I knew that someone would come forward to defend her, or that the court would appoint some counsel to do so."

"Did you send for the man Maxwell to talk over the matter?"

"No, I did not."

"But he might have informed you whether she was in such a state of distraction when he left her as would be likely to lead to the committal of a crime so dreadful?"

"Anyway, I did not send for him."

"When did you see Maxwell last? Be careful in your answer."

The witness turned deathly white, and he grasped the rail for support. The question was repeated, but no answer was given to it.

"Take this watch and chain in your hand. Do you recognise it?"

Witness (in a faint voice): "Yes, it is mine."

"Yes, it is yours. Your name is engraved on the case. Do you recognise this diamond ring? Is it also yours?"

"Yes."

"You gave these articles to Maxwell last night?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He threatened me."

"With what?"

"I am not obliged to say."

"That is true. For the present, I have done with you."

Counsel for the prosecution: "I have no questions to ask the witness."

Mr. Norman Richbell left the box, and was about to quit the court when the Judge interposed.

Judge: "Do not allow the witness to leave the court. Let an officer be appointed to take charge of him. His further presence may be required."

Counsel for the defence: "Call Mr. Maxwell."

CHAPTER XIX.

MAXWELL MAKES OPEN CONFESSION.

"YOUR name is Maxwell?"

"Yes."

"What is your christian name?"

"Only Maxwell."

"What is your trade?"

"I follow the road."

"Do you give open-air exhibitions?"

"Sometimes; and sometimes under a roof."

"You are an acrobat?"

"I am a good many things."

"You practise sleight-of-hand, tricks with the cards, tumbling, and conjuring generally?"

"That's correct."

"You profess, also, to know something of second-sight, clairvoyance, and mesmerism?"

"I know something about them."

"And these are included in your exhibitions?"

"Yes, on and off."

"Let Mrs. Tregartin come forward."

Mrs. Tregartin made her way through the body of the court.

"You spoke in your evidence, Mrs. Tregartin, of a man whom you saw in a field, and afterwards at the door of your cottage, in conversation with the accused. Look at the witness now in the box. Is he the man you referred to?"

"He is the man, sir."

"You are positive of it?"

"I am, sir."

Maxwell: "The lady is quite right. I never intended to deny it."

The examination of the witness was continued.

"You admit going to see the accused at Mrs. Tregartin's cottage?"

"I do."

"How did you know the accused lived there?"

"I had instructions."

"From whom?"

"From the gentleman who employed me."

"What is the name of the gentleman?"

"Mr. Norman Richbell."

"Let Mr. Norman Richbell stand up. Is that gentleman your employer?"

"That is the gentleman I am speaking of."

"What was the nature of your mission?"

"I was to go to the young lady, and try to persuade her to give up the baby."

"Being instructed to do so by Mr. Norman Richbell?"

"Of course. I couldn't have made it up out of my own head. I never heard of the young lady till I was told of her."

The Judge: "By what name did you know her?"

"Mary Lee, my lord."

"That was the name Mr. Norman Richbell told you she bore?"

"That was the name, my lord."

Counsel for the defence: "Do I understand that on your first visit to the accused you were instructed to induce her to give her child into your charge, there and then?"

"Well, not exactly. I was to lead up to it, and get to know how she would take it."

"How did she take it?"

"Well, the first time I saw her there wasn't much said about it. She wasn't exactly the kind of lady I expected to see."

"What kind of lady did you expect to see." ?

"No lady at all. A common kind of girl."

"Your impression arising from Mr. Norman Richbell's description of her?"

"Yes."

"Very little passed, then, between you and the accused on your first visit respecting the child?"

"Very little. I just touched upon it, that's all, and I saw it would be a difficult job."

"You regard yourself as a good judge of character?"

"Yes, I do. I'm not often mistaken."

"It was your judgment of the character of the accused that caused you to believe your task would be a difficult one?"

"Yes. Some women are rougher than others, and it doesn't much matter what you say to them. This young lady was one of the delicate ones."

"How long did your first visit occupy?"

"About half an hour."

"As you spoke so little about the child, you must have conversed upon other subjects. What were they?"

"I was instructed to keep the young lady in good temper, and to make her generally well disposed towards the gentleman who employed me. I was to excite her pity for him."

"Did he require her pity?"

"I was to make her believe he did. He would have

come to see her himself—so I was told to say—but he had met with an accident to his foot which kept him a prisoner in the house. The doctor would not allow him to stir out; if he was not very careful he would have to have his foot amputated."

"It was not the truth?"

"Oh, no. There was nothing the matter with the gentleman."

"Did you succeed in deceiving the lady?"

"I think so. She believed every word I said."

"Was anything else talked of?"

"Letters. She wasn't to send any more through the post-office, nor to go for any more there. I was to find some other way of sending and receiving the letters. On my way to the village I walked through Brentingham Forest, and saw a tree that I thought would do for a post-office. The young lady made no objection."

"What reason did you give for this new method of conducting the correspondence?"

"I was to say that the gentleman had some trouble with his family, and that he would be completely ruined if anything was discovered about him and the young lady. I was to give her very kind messages, and say how sorry he was for everything, and that it was not his fault but his family's that things weren't different with him and her."

"She received all you said as true? She did not dispute with you?"

"No; she believed everything."

"On your first visit did you take her any money?"

"No. I was to tell her he hadn't a penny, but hoped to have some soon."

"You saw her on other occasions?"

"A good many times, in Brentingham Forest."

"What reason did you give for not going openly to the cottage?"

"That it was best for her and the gentleman, who, if he was discovered—which he might be if I was to show myself too freely—would have to run away from the country."

"On any of those subsequent visits did you take her any money?"

"No."

"You kept promising her, however?"

"Yes. I was to keep her in a regular string."

"I should like to hear how this systematic duplicity was to serve your employer?"

"Well, he knew she was hard up, and he thought he would starve her out, frighten her into doing what he wanted about the baby."

"You continued to speak to her of this plan?"

"Yes, I led up to it gradually, but I saw at last it was so much time thrown away. 'It's no use, guv'nor,' I said to him; 'she won't give it up willingly.' Then he said she'd have to give it up whether she was willing or not. He asked me to think of some way of doing this."

"Before we continue this branch of the subject, I wish to ask you whether you knew from the first the right name of your employer?"

"No, I didn't. He said it was Harcourt; but I found out for myself that it was Richbell."

"He was not pleased at your discovery?"

"He was in a regular scot about it, and flew into a passion and denied it; but I said, 'It's no good, guv'nor; easy does it."

"Now, respecting your finding some way of getting her child from her without consent. What plan did you finally think of?"

"It isn't right to say I thought of any at all; we settled it between us. It came about first by his saying that she was sensitive and nervous, and could be made to believe almost anything; and I saw, too, that she was terribly worked up. I've seen people thrown into trances in the state she was in. I've done it myself, and made them believe what I liked."

"Without making either one of you solely responsible, what was ultimately agreed upon?"

"I couldn't take the baby away by force; all the fat would have been in the fire. We spoke about chloroform. If I could make her lose her senses, and put a thought into her mind that she didn't think of herself, the thing might be managed. We went through it all, Mr. Richbell and me, and I started to do it."

"You mean to make us believe that this foul plot was discussed between you in cold blood?"

"I've sworn to speak the truth."

"Did you think of the consequences in the event of your success—of the consequences to her?"

"We didn't speak about that. His opinion was that she'd soon get over the loss, and, as he knew her better than I did, I took what he said."

"By that time, during your many visits to the village and its neighbourhood, you had made yourself well acquainted with the place?"

"Yes."

"You knew something about Rocky Reaches?"

"A good deal about it."

"Was it understood between you and your employer what was to be done with the child?"

"I was to do as I liked about it."

"Make away with it?"

"There was some idea of the kind."

At this answer a shudder ran through the court.

"The plan was to be carried out on the 25th of April?"

"That was the date."

"You had made an appointment with her in Brentingham Forest for that day?"

"It was made by a letter which Mr. Richbell wrote."

"You went to the forest on that day?"

"Yes, I did."

"Taking chloroform with you?"

"Yes."

"Now, attend carefully to what I say. You saw the accused there with her child?"

"Yes; she was there."

"Did you present yourself to her?"

"No."

"What did you do?"

"I steeped a handkerchief in the chloroform——"

"Stop. I have told you to be careful. We must have the occurrences of that afternoon in regular order. You were hiding behind a tree?"

"Yes."

"You whispered some words to her, keeping yourself carefully concealed?"

"Did I?"

"I will refresh your memory, and I warn you strongly of the consequences of swearing to what is not true, and of denying, on your oath, what is true. The words you whispered were, 'Better if baby were dead; then all your troubles will be over. You would be a free

woman, and no one would know what has happened.' Do you deny this?"

"I did whisper something or other."

"To the same effect?"

"Well, yes."

"The accused turned her head in your direction, and then it was that you administered the chloroform?"

"I don't deny it."

"While she sank to the ground in semi-insensibility you repeated the words I have spoken, or words to that effect?"

"Yes."

"Your reason for this was that, when she became conscious, she should suppose that the loss of her child was brought about by her own act?"

"I thought it was likely."

"She became insensible?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"I carried her to Rocky Reaches."

"And the child?"

"I carried that as well."

"You are a powerful man?"

"I am strong enough."

"Having carried her and the child there, what did you do next?"

"I laid her down."

"What did you do with the child?"

"I took it away with me."

The prisoner started to her feet, and, with her face convulsed with conflicting emotions which deprived her of speech, stretched forth her arms to the witness. A violent tumult ensued in the court. The spectators

rose, and so great was the confusion that it was many minutes before order was restored. These minutes were employed by the counsel for the defence and the prisoner's mother in an endeavour to calm the unhappy lady, but their efforts were not successful. Recovering her voice, she moaned, "My child, my child!" and looked wildly round, as though seeking a means of escape. At length the officers succeeded in obtaining comparative silence, and the voice of the counsel for the defence was heard once more, questioning the witness:

"Is the child alive?"

"It is."

The scream that pierced the court went to the hearts of every person present at this extraordinary scene. Immediately afterwards the prisoner fell to the ground.

The Judge: "The court will adjourn for half-an-hour. Officers, look to the witnesses."

CHAPTER XX.

THE END OF THE TRIAL.

Upon the reassembling of the court, the counsel for the defence addressed the Judge:

"My lord, I am happy to say that the accused lady is now in a condition to go through the concluding formalities of this trial, which I am desirous, as I am sure all here are, to make as brief as possible. The mere statement of the witness Maxwell as to the safety of the child is not, I am aware, sufficient for the law, but during the adjournment we have been in communication with the wife of the witness, who has supplied us with information which will enable us to produce the child within a few hours. I am in your lordship's hands, and I ask you whether it is necessary for me to continue my examination of the man who is now in the box?"

The Judge: "The circumstances of this trial are unprecedented. There is, no doubt, something more to be elucidated from the witness which may assist the ends of justice. I take it, therefore, upon myself to call upon you to conclude the examination. There is the question of motive, and it had better be inquired into here."

The Foreman of the Jury: "My lord, the jury desire me to say that they are ready to deliver their verdict."

The Judge: "It is my duty to inform you that the law must take its course, and that your verdict cannot

be delivered until we have further proof respecting the child. Meanwhile, the witness is under examination."

Counsel for the defence (to the witness Maxwell): "When you laid the accused lady on the rocks was she still insensible?"

"She was."

"Showing no signs of early recovery?"

"Not that I could see."

"When the Reaches were subsequently searched certain articles were found on the rocks—a brooch belonging to the accused, a child's hood and woollen shoe. How did they get there?"

"That's more than I can say."

"In our opinion it is not more than you can say. The articles must have been placed there by human hands—yours?"

"Might not the lady have dropped the brooch when she recovered?"

"We will not admit that presumption. The brooch was securely pinned. It has been produced in court, and the jury can see for themselves that the pin is strong and firm, and, once in its place on a dress, is not likely to become detached. The hood and shoe were found far from the shore, in such a position as to render it a certainty that human hands had fixed them in the rocks, in order that they should be afterwards discovered by persons searching there. What have you to say to this?"

"Nothing."

"You will give me no other answers concerning these articles than those you have already given?"

"I am not able to give you any other answer."

"The jury will form their own opinion upon your

veracity. In leaving the lady in a state of insensibility on Rocky Reaches, after the scene you have described, was it your intention that she should believe that she had drowned her child?"

"I cannot say it was my intention."

"You must have had some design? What was it?"

"I have no other answer to give you."

"You must have known that disinterested persons would come to that conclusion, the child being missing, and the articles found as I have stated?"

"I did not give it a thought."

"You returned to your employer?"

"Yes."

"With the child?"

"No. I left it where it would be taken care of."

"We are thankful to you for that, but for nothing else. What report did you make to your employer?"

"That the child was drowned."

"By you?"

"I did not say that. I told him that it had fallen into the sea, and was carried away before I could rescue it."

"What was your motive for this base falsehood?"

"Well, he hadn't paid me for my work, and I thought it would give me a hold over him."

"In a word, you intended to levy blackmail upon him through his fears?"

"It was the only way I could force him to behave fairly to me."

"You visited him last night?"

"Yes."

"He gave you his watch and chain and ring?"

"He had no money to give me, he said, so he gave me what I could turn into money."

"You knew this trial was proceeding?"

"Yes, and I knew it could not be finished till to-day. I intended to send a telegram, saying where the child was to be found. That would have set the lady free."

"We have your word for it. Did it occur to you that for several weeks past your victim has been suffering intense agony?"

"I am not bound to tell you what was in my mind. I have told you too much already."

Counsel for the defence (addressing the Judge): "I do not see what purpose can be served, my lord, by prolonging this examination. A telegram has just been delivered to me, imparting the happy news that the child is being brought here, and will arrive, if no accident occurs on the road, in three or four hours. The distance the person who has it in charge has to travel is under thirty miles. It is now two o'clock. May I ask your lordship to adjourn the court till six o'clock, in order that the suspense which the accused is suffering from may not be prolonged during the coming night?"

The Judge: "To spare her further suffering we would sit all night. Let the court be adjourned till six o'clock."

"I thank your lordship. If the child arrives before six, may it be delivered to the accused?"

"It may. The officers will see that the last two witnesses are in attendance."

Long before six o'clock the approaches to the court-house were crowded with sympathisers, and the oldest inhabitant declared that such a scene of excitement had never been witnessed in the town. Men and women were eagerly discussing the wonderful trial, and, though the

lady who had passed through such an ordeal so terrible was a stranger to them, from one and all rose a chorus of thanksgiving at the turn it had taken. The strange news had been flashed over the telegraph wires through the entire kingdom, and the most distant newspapers were clamouring for further particulars, and were eagerly awaiting a description of the final scene There was, however, one rather dissatisfied person in the throng, and this was weak-witted Silly Thomas from Brentingham village, who was disposed to raise a complaint to Providence that he had not been called as a witness to prove his intimate knowledge of Rocky Reaches and the infallible manner in which the sea washed up its dead.

The scene within the court was not less stirring. It was packed to the walls, and every man and woman therein, with the exception of some who were immediately interested in the trial, was glowing with excitement. They were stirred to the depths by the occurrences of the day, but what they felt was not clearly expressed in their countenances. The Judge sat upon the seat of justice with pale, stern face, gazing before him apparently calm and unmoved, as though the part he was playing was merely judicial, and presented no features in which he was vitally concerned. Intense relief was visible in the face of Mr. Molesworth, the counsel for the defence, but he, also, was apparently calm. In the dock sat the accused, with face pressed down to the face of her child, whom she was holding tight to her breast.

The necessary formalities were quickly gone though. The woman into whose charge Maxwell had given the child, testified to its being brought to her by him on

the night of the 25th of April. He had told her it was his own child, for whom he wished to find a home for a few months, and there was nothing in his manner which aroused her suspicions. Mrs. Tregartin identified the child, and the mother, also, had one question addressed to her.

"Is the child in your arms yours?"

"Yes."

There were no further speeches before the jury delivered their verdict. The Judge said but a very few words, and when they pronounced the verdict, "Not Guilty," deafening cheers rose from the spectators, which, taken up without, made the streets ring again. No attempt was made for some time to restore order, but at length the Judge held up his hand, and "Silence —silence!" was called by the ushers. A hush fell upon the assembly, and every head was craned forward to hear what was about to be said.

The Judge: "I understand that the jury have something to add to their verdict."

The Foreman: "We have, my lord. The jury desire me to express their abhorrence of the conduct of the two witnesses, Maxwell and Mr. Norman Richbell, and their hope that Government will take some means to punish them for the atrocity of which they have been guilty."

The Judge: "It is a proper hope, and shall be transmitted to the right quarter. Before the court rises I have something to say. During this trial I made the remark that it was unprecedented. I thank God it is so. Never in the course of a long experience have I presided at a trial in which villainy so base has providentially been brought to light. The

unhappy and tortured lady, for whom no living being can entertain any but feelings of deepest sympathy and compassion, has been made the victim of as foul a plot as ever entered the mind of man. To one so delicate, and sensitive, and helpless, the consequences, without the intervention of the law, might have been fatal. It is a mercy, not only that her life has been spared, but that her reason has been saved. To the counsel who has defended her I extend my admiration; he has done well and worthily. But what shall I say of the wretches, Mr. Norman Richbell and Maxwell? How can I express my opinion of their unutterable villainy? They have earned the execration of mankind. The plot in which they engaged stamps them with odium which will cling to them to the last hour of their lives. It will be for the Crown to consider whether measures can be taken to punish the offenders, whose actions might have led to the most serious consequences; and let them and all other transgressors bear ever in mind that, sooner or later, their sins shall find them out!"

These impressive words, impressively spoken, were listened to with awe and wonder, and when Mr. Justice Richbell gathered his robes about him, all who had heard him rose to their feet, as by one impulse, and gazed upon him in pity and respect as he passed from the court.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. JUSTICE RICHBELL BIDS FAREWELL TO BENCH AND BAR.

THE sensational incidents of this trial created great excitement. For many days the newspaper columns teemed with matter relating to it and to its further developments. Editors, reporters, and correspondents rushed to the fray, and, while general sympathy was expressed for Miss Leycester, general condemnation was bestowed upon the miscreants to whose foul plot she had so nearly fallen a victim. After the fashion of the times these sentiments took various forms. There were proposals to start a fund to heal the wounds that had been inflicted, and two or three papers went so far as to commence the publication of subscriptions. This direction of the public movement was effectually scotched by Mr. Molesworth, who wrote to the newspapers, stating that no fund was necessary, and that no money would be accepted by any person on his side connected with the trial. In his letter he said the greatest kindness and consideration that could be shown towards the lady he had defended would be that people should cease to take any interest in her affairs. "Publicity is painful to her," he wrote; "it keeps open a wound which time alone can heal." With some papers this appeal had the desired effect; with others it fell dead. Indeed, a few found theme in it for fresh comment and sensational headlines. The matter was

public, and was too tempting a morsel to be allowed to die out. Offers of marriage were publicly made, and more than one music-hall manager wrote, asking upon what terms she would appear at their establishments. Failing a satisfactory response, failing, indeed, any answer whatever to these insulting propositions, songs were written and sung in the music-halls, the most popular of which was one entitled, "For the Defence." Apart from personal feelings which Mr. Molesworth entertained on the subject of publicity, this ditty and others were a direct compliment to him. In every circle of society his conduct was eulogised, and he could have ridden upon this wave of popularity to fame and fortune. But he had other views, and steadily refused every brief that was offered to him.

It was a meritorious feature in this sea of excitement that Mr. Justice Richbell's name was not mentioned in papers of the higher class, and his action not commented upon, the cause of silence being the respect and esteem in which the eminent Judge was held. But, as with all other public men, he had his enemies, and these did not spare him. It was not uncommon to see at the head of columns of comment such introductory words as, "What will Mr. Justice Richbell do?" "What Mr. Justice Richbell ought to do." "What the Government ought to do." But for the present, so far as the public knew, the Judge did nothing; he simply kept himself in retirement.

Presently another exciting feature was added to the matter by the announcement that the Judge's son, Mr. Norman Richbell, had made his escape from prison, and that no trace of him could be discovered. Then the fury of the Judge's enemies rose to the highest pitch.

Here was a miscreant who had been engaged in an abominable conspiracy. Because he was the son of a Judge, should he be allowed to evade the just punishment of his misdeeds? Dastardly attacks were made upon Mr. Justice Richbell; it was hinted that he himself had connived at his son's escape. Several weeks passed by, during which other startling events claimed record in newspaper columns and occupied the place of honour therein. It was not till four months had elapsed that the dying embers of the trial flickered again into flame. It was announced that on a certain morning, in the court of the Lord Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Richbell would take leave of the Bar on his retirement from the Bench. "At length," said his enemies, "he has been forced to adopt the only course that was open to him." But in the use of the word "forced," these writers were distinctly in error.

In any event the retirement of so eminent a Judge would have been sufficient to crowd the court, but the strange and startling episodes of the last important trial in which he had been engaged rendered the scene more imposing than any of a like character within the memory of man. The list of those present occupied a quarter of a column of the "Times" newspaper, and every name set down was a name of mark. The Attorney-General, in a most impressive speech, spoke of the deep and general regret which the announcement of the retirement had caused. He recalled certain incidents in the distinguished career of the learned Judge which could never be forgotten, not only because they reflected honour upon the man, but because they formed a lasting and noble tribute to the integrity of the Judge. He assured the subject of his eloquent

remarks that never within his experience, nor within the experience of all who listened to him, had the retirement of a chief caused sorrow so profound, and he begged the learned Judge to believe that he would take with him the affection and esteem of every member of the Bar and Bench. It was a lengthy and touching speech, and from its opening to its closing sentence murmurs of sympathetic approval betokened that he was expressing not alone his own sentiments, but the sentiments of all who listened to him. Upon the event which led to the retirement he spoke not a word.

At the conclusion of this address Mr. Justice Richbell remained for some moments silent. That he was suffering inwardly was clear, and it was as clear that he was making a strong effort to preserve that outward calmness of demeanour by which he had always been distinguished. When he spoke it was in a low, distinct voice.

The opening of his speech, which was much shorter than such an event generally calls for, was devoted to the expression of reciprocal sentiments of affection and esteem towards all with whom in the course of his career he had been associated. He begged them to believe that they would hold an enduring place in his mind and in his heart, and that he should ever look back to his connection with them as supplying the brightest recollections of an arduous life. "It is not given to any man," he said, "to live free from error, be he the highest or the lowest in station, and I have been as fallible as other of my fellow-men. But I may claim for myself that in the exercise of my functions I have held steadily before me the principles of justice, and that, during the years I have occupied

my honourable place on the Bench, I have never deviated from them. To me they have been sacred and immutable, and I have never allowed a selfish or personal consideration to divert me from the solemn pledge I made with myself when it pleased her Majesty to select me for the judicial office I have filled. This reflection will be a comfort and a consolation to me when I pass from this scene. I may be pardoned for stating here that it was my wish to retire three months ago, and that, had it not been for the reluctance of the Lord Chancellor to accept my resignation—a reluctance which I esteem as one of the highest honours that have been paid to me—my wish would have been carried out almost immediately after I expressed it. My lords, Mr. Attorney-General, and Gentlemen of the Bar, I wish you a respectful and affectionate farewell."

Thus closed the judicial career of Mr. Justice Richbell.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOOD-BYE TO ENGLAND.

SOME three months after this event Richard Molesworth and his friend Andrew Denver were closeted together in the latter's chambers, where they had been dining. The table was cleared, and they were sitting over their cigars and claret. Since the trial they had seen very little of each other, some unexpected business in connection with a legacy left to him by a relative in Jamaica having taken Denver from England, and kept him absent until this day. There had been correspondence between the friends, and it had appeared strange to Denver that Molesworth had made no mention of Miss Leycester in any one of his letters. He himself had asked after her, but Molesworth had consistently evaded the subject by saying that he would wait till they met in London to explain matters, that things were not yet arranged, and that he would wait till they were, etc., etc., etc. This was not exactly satisfactory to Denver, but being at so great a distance he was forced to content himself as best he could.

"And now, Dick," said Denver, "perhaps you will tell me all about it."

Mr. Molesworth nodded, and looked thoughtfully at his friend.

"I cannot tell you," he said, "how glad I am that you have returned."

"Yes, of course," said Denver, "and I am quite as

glad to be with you again, but I want to speak first of other things."

"Yes, Andrew," said Mr. Molesworth, and just then said no more.

"Have you been taking lessons from the Sphynx?" enquired Denver. "I see plainly I shall get no satisfaction out of you without a cross-examination. How is Miss Leycester?"

"In health, very well."

"In spirits?"

"Not so well; but there is now a brighter outlook, and I have hopes that before long she will be something like her old self again."

"Still enigmatical. And the child?"

"She has lost it."

"Dead, Dick?"

"Dead, Andrew."

"Ah, that is the cause of her being low-spirited."

"Partly. Shadows of sad memories will hang over her for some time to come, but even these I hope eventually to dispel."

"For Heaven's sake speak plainer, Dick, or I'll shy this glass at your head! First, though, about yourself?"

He cast a curious glance at his friend.

"In what respect?" asked Mr. Molesworth.

"In respect of Miss Leycester."

"You want to know if my feelings have changed towards her. They have not. I love her as devotedly as ever."

"And she?"

"I dare not approach the subject yet, but I think she understands me."

"Faithful old Dick!"

"I can be that, if nothing else. Faithful to friendship, faithful to love. Throw the end of that cigar away. Light another; I will do the same, and you shall know all."

The fresh cigars were lighted, and Mr. Molesworth resumed.

"There is no happiness for her here, Andrew. I suspected from the first there would not be, and I knew it for a certainty within a short time after her release. I kept the newspapers from her, but she felt that she was being made the subject of public comment, and with her delicate nature she shrank from such publicity. She hardly dared make her appearance in the streets; she thought every person who looked at her was acquainted with her story. I went to the core of the matter, and had some private conversations with her mother, from whom I have not disguised my feelings. I am glad to tell you she encourages them, and looks forward, as I do, to happier days. In the course of these conversations I learnt from Mrs. Leycester that she had a brother in Gipps Land from whom she had not heard for years. He is a squatter there; has cattle galore, and is reputed fairly well-to-do. This I discovered later, not so very long ago, indeed. Obtaining this brother's address from Mrs. Leycester I wrote to him. He replied. The upshot of it is, that he has offered Mrs. Leycester and her daughter a home with him. They have nothing to bind them here."

"Except you, Dick."

"Yes, except me; but I intend to get over that difficulty."

"Are they going out to the good brother?"

"They are going out to the good brother, Andrew."

"And you?"

"I am going in the same ship."

A sad expression appeared on Denver's face. "So I am to lose you, old friend?"

"It is decreed, Andrew; unless you come out with me."

"Not possible, Dick. The affairs of that legacy—confound all legacies! say I—will compel me to make another voyage to Jamaica. I am tied for a year or more, I am afraid."

"But after that?"

"After that, we shall see. Before then I shall hear what reports you have to make. I might do worse. What are your plans?"

"I have an idea of buying a share in a cattle station myself. It would be a rare look-out for you and me, Andrew. The Old World is used up. Try the New."

"I shall bear it in mind. More unlikely things have happened. Does Miss Leycester know—but of course she does."

"Know what?"

"That you are going out with her?"

"I think not."

Denver stared at his friend. "It is a plot of your own invention, then."

"Not entirely. Mrs. Leycester is in it—and Mrs. Leycester approves."

"I trust your faithfulness will be rewarded, Dick."

"I do not despair."

"When does the ship sail?"

"The day after to-morrow. All my preparations are made. I leave London for Plymouth to-morrow afternoon."

"So soon!" There was a little silence; the two men looked tenderly at each other. "I can't blame you,

Dick; I should do the same myself. So this is our last night together."

"For some time to come, at least. It will depend upon you. As with us, Andrew, you have nothing to bind you here. Purse full, heart free, your old friend waiting for you in the New World. We shall miss each other; you have been a true friend. I shudder to think what might have been the result of the trial had it not been for you. Come down to Plymouth with me to-morrow. Miss Leycester will be glad to shake hands with you. She knows what we owe you."

"Yes, Dick, I will come down with you."

They sat up talking till late in the night, and parted with renewed expressions of affection.

On the deck of the good ship *Petronel* stood a little group, consisting of Mrs. Leycester and her daughter Margaret, and the friends Richard Molesworth and Andrew Denver. The last adieus were being made.

In Mrs. Leycester's eyes rested a look of content; her arm was round her daughter's waist; the two ladies were in black.

As he gazed at the young girl Denver thought he had never beheld a more beautiful face, and he did not wonder at his friend's devotion. Time had tempered the agony depicted there when he last saw her in court during her terrible hours of trial. Peace was coming to her. But grief was still tugging at her heartstrings. The parting from her faithful champion was so near! In a few moments he would be lost to her—perhaps for ever!

The friends of the passengers were ordered ashore. The vessel was beginning to move towards the ocean. Friends and relatives were tearing themselves from

each other, and coming back, and pressing heart to heart. "And don't forget us!" "And be sure you write!" "God bless and speed you!" "God bless you—God bless you!" Hearts were throbbing; eyes were brimming over.

"All ashore!"

"I must wish you good-bye," said Andrew Denver to Mrs. Leycester.

"Good-bye, dear friend," she said, giving him her hand.

"I hope you will be happy—I am sure you will be happy."

The words were spoken as much to Margaret as to her mother.

The young lady held out her hand.

"God bless you for your kindness," she said, and held her head down to hide her tears.

But, man though he was, every inch of him, and true, and sincere, her tears were not flowing for him. He knew that well, and he was glad; there was no envy in his heart, though he mentally breathed a wish that he might some day meet with another woman as lovely and sweet as she who stood before him.

She turned towards her champion, and slowly raised her head. The word "farewell" was on her lips, but she could not utter it.

"Well, let us get it over, Dick. Good-bye, dear old friend, and Heaven's own luck go with you!"

"Good-bye, Andrew. Make up your mind to join us. God bless you, dear boy."

Hand tightly clasped in hand a moment, and then Denver tore himself away.

Had she heard aright? These two friends bidding

each other adieu! One for the land, one for the sea! What did it mean?

"Mr. Molesworth——"

"Yes, Madge?"

She looked helplessly, pitifully, this way and that. To tell him it was time he should leave her! How could she do it—how could she do it? It seemed that never until this moment had she understood what was in her heart.

"All ashore! All ashore! Now, then, please. You haven't another moment unless you want to be carried out to sea! Look out, there!"

The sailors were singing. Andrew Denver was climbing down to the boat. And still her champion did not move. He saw the suspense, the suffering in her lovely face.

"Madge, you must not be angry with me!"

"I can never be that. Oh, Mr. Molesworth, tell me what it all means!"

"It means, dear, that I am going with you to the new land, to the new home in the brighter world."

"Going with me to the new land!"

"You must not send me away, Madge, for I haven't another place but this ship to put my head in. Do you think I could let you go alone? Will you forgive me?"

She raised her eyes to his, and through her tears looked tenderly at him. He took her hand, and she did not withdraw it.

"There is Andrew Denver, Madge, looking up at us from the boat. Good-bye once more, old friend!"

They waved their hands to him, and he returned the salutation, and gazed brightly at them.

"That's all right," he said, mentally hugging himself. "Good luck to them!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

FROM THE NEW WORLD TO THE OLD.

TWELVE months after the *Petronel* sailed from Plymouth for Australia, Andrew Denver, having wound up all the affairs relating to the legacy that had been left to him, received the following letter from Richard Molesworth :

"MY DEAR ANDREW,

"What a glorious life this is out here! I am fairly in love with it, and so will you be when you are enjoying it with me. For I depend upon you, old fellow. No shirking out of it, mind, or you'll repent it all your days. Your letter, received yesterday, gladdened my heart. It is not half a promise—I don't accept it as such ; it is a whole promise. By the time you are reading this you will have finished your bothersome business, and there will be nothing to detain you. We are waiting for you—all of us.

"I do not intend to write you a long letter ; only to give you some news that will interest you. There are two important items in it—one, a picture in black shadow ; the other, a picture in bright light. One, night ; the other, morning.

"I will get rid of the shadow first.

"Within six miles of the home station is a great stretch of bush land. You can ride as the crow flies twenty odd miles before you come to the end of it, and, when you do, look out, for you are on the borders of

Nuggety Ranges. To the east, to the west, to the north they lie, rocks piled upon rocks, declivity gliding into declivity, a shallow basin here, waves of rocks ahead of it, to the right of it, to the left of it, for Heaven knows how many miles all around. And they are all the same. You walk a mile, and you see no difference in the scene around you from the spot you started from; you walk five miles, and you view the same scene. There is absolutely no landmark, and a man who does not know the stars may say his prayers there. As many have done already. Whitening human bones of men who have lost their way in this fearful wilderness of stone have been found again and again. To think of the tortures they must have endured before merciful death relieved them makes one's blood run cold.

"Some of our cattle had strayed. Away we ride, Jim the Bushman (one of our stock-riders) and I, in search of them. 'In which direction, Jim?' I ask. He points with his whip, first to the ground, then straight ahead. What he sees on the ground I leave to him; I see nothing. But straight ahead of us, in the direction he is pointing, lie Nuggety Ranges. Off we gallop.

"He tracks the cattle unerringly, and we do the twenty-four miles in two hours and a half, reaching the borders of Nuggety Ranges before eleven o'clock a.m. We are early birds, here in this life-giving land. There are still two bullocks missing, and they are among the Ranges. We soon track them, and are driving them back, cracking our stock whips with a snap they can almost hear at the home station, when Jim suddenly pulls up, and jumps off his horse. I follow suit. And

there before us lies a man, stone dead. 'He hasn't been dead two hours,' says Jim. I do not ask how he knows. When Jim makes a statement, we accept it. He is infallible. Andrew, I will not pile up the agony. The dead man's face would have been immediately familiar to me, could I have seen it, but the tangled hair about it made it at first strange to me. Little by little I recognised it. It was the face of Mr. Norman Richbell. And upon searching his pockets, it was confirmed. God knows how he came there. From the day of his escape from prison nothing had been heard of him. He must have made his way to Australia, and here the judgment of the Eternal overtook him. I enclose the papers we found upon him. It will be a mercy to take them to his father. Say that we gave him burial, and said a prayer over his grave, imploring mercy on him, a sinner.

"Was I glad? I dare not answer the question. The life of this man stood in my path, blocking the road to happiness. I knew it, although Margaret did not speak of it; but there are some things we do not need to be told. Every day of my life my love for her grew deeper and stronger—and yet she held back. It was the memory of this man, this living man, that prevented her from falling into my arms. And now he was dead!

"Gradually I broke the news to her, and said no more awhile. I will not disguise from you that I brought all my wisdom to bear upon this vital question of the happiness of my life. It was not possible that I could keep myself from showing my love for her: she has seen it all through, and so has every one around. So I bided my time, while the dear angel devoted herself to prayer.

"Yesterday, before your letter arrived, I took heart of grace, and spoke outright. She listened to me in silence, deeply moved, her dear head cast down; but I saw the dew on her lashes. I told her how I loved her, how the happiness of my life depended upon her—— Well, well, why should I weary you with the love-scene? I could not, if I would, recall what passed; only here and there, a look, a word.

"Andrew, dear friend, she has promised to be my wife. I am in heaven. You will be too late for the wedding if you take ship the moment my letter is delivered to you. In two months from the date hereof my dear Madge will be my wife.

"We all unite in affectionate regards to the dear friend who stood by us, who worked for us, in the dark days that are passed. May Heaven shed its blessings upon him, and grant him just such a happy future as stretches before my dear girl and me.

"Your faithful friend,

"RICHARD MOLESWORTH."

THE END.

Edinburgh, August 1891.

FURNISH THROUGHOUT (Regd.).

OETZMANN & CO.,

67, 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, & 79,

HAMPSTEAD ROAD

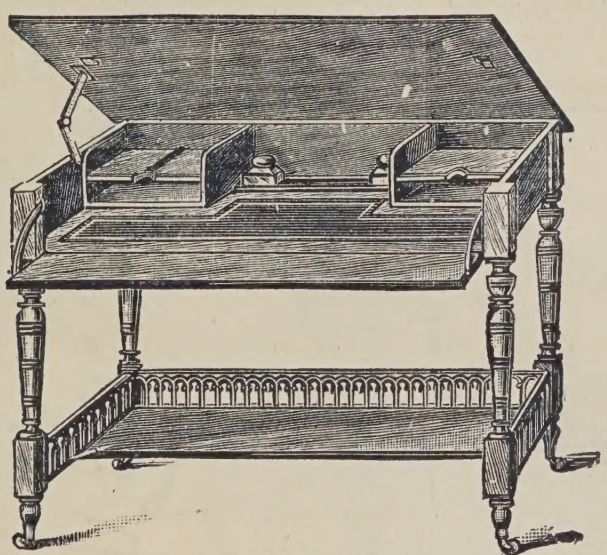
(Near Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street Station, London).

ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE

(OVER 2,000 ILLUSTRATIONS),

The Best Furnishing Guide extant, containing "How I Furnished my House for £120," and other Articles on Artistic Furnishing, reprinted from "The Lady,"

POST FREE ON APPLICATION.



OETZMANN'S PATENT WRITING TABLE.

When closed forms an ordinary occasional table. Can be closed and locked with one action and can only be opened with a key. In solid walnut, and lined with cloth ... £2 18s. 6d.

OETZMANN & CO.,

Cabinet Makers, Decorators, and Complete House Furnishers,

67, 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, & 79,

HAMPSTEAD ROAD, LONDON.

Pears' Soap

I have found it matchless for the hands and complexion

Adelina Patti

Since using Pears' Soap I have discarded all others.

Lillie Langtry

For
redi
the

JAMES MACKAY,

Educational and Miscellaneous Bookseller

4 BRISTO PLACE & 16 FORREST ROAD,

EDINBURGH.

Every Description of Books Bought, Sold, or Exchanged.

Catalogues Free.